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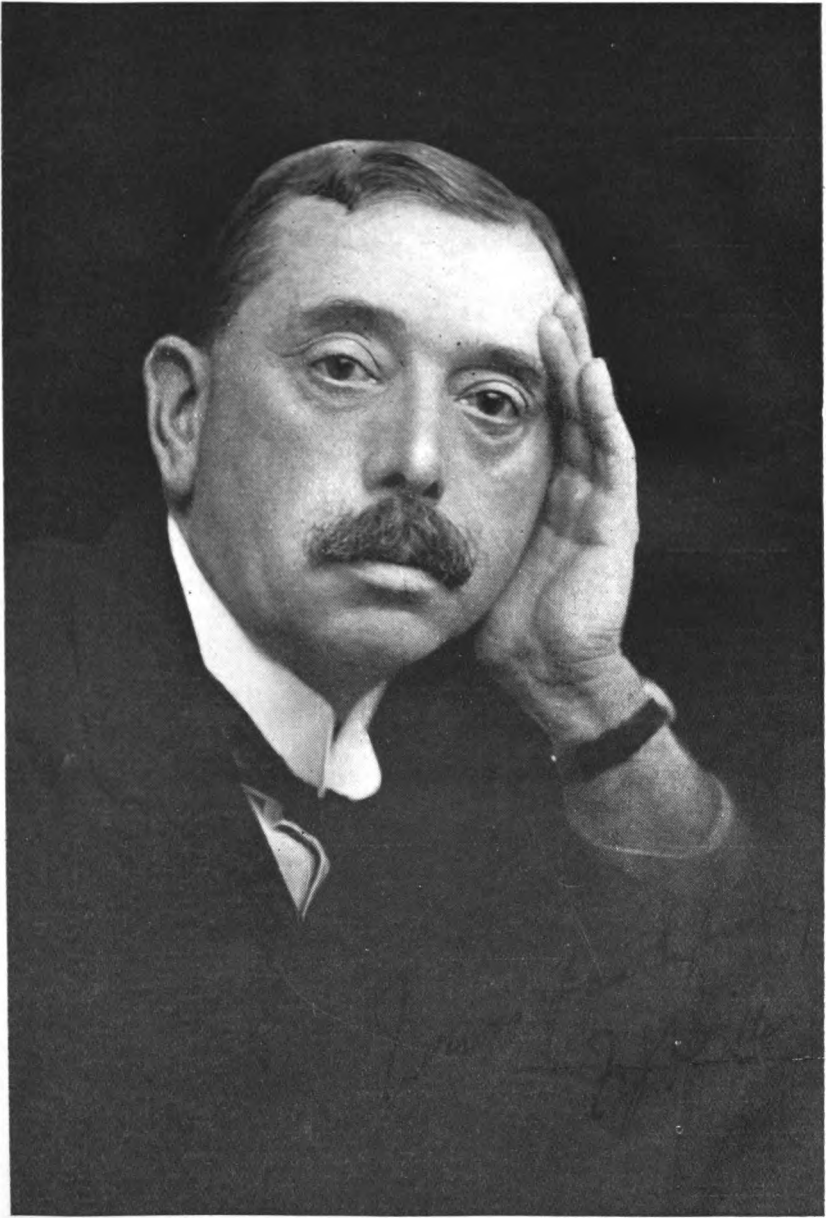
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Frontispiece

Belgian Soldiers at Home in the United Kingdom

Les Soldats Belges en Congé dans le Royaume Uni

BY

**H. CAMPBELL,
TRANSPORT SUPERINTENDENT
OF THE
WAR REFUGEES COMMITTEE.**

DECEMBER, 1917.

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FOREWORD.

THE Belgian soldier is a familiar figure in our streets and railway stations, and the question must often have been asked: Why is he here? How does he come? Who looks after him?

The object of this book is to give some reply in detail to these questions. Broadly, the answer to the first is that he has come because his relatives are refugees in this country. The Belgian soldier, ousted from his own country by the fortunes of war following its spirited resistance to the enemy's demands, has come over on leave to visit his compatriots who are in like case, and, like them, finds in this country a temporary home. Where else should he go? The soldier on leave is thus linked to the refugee. His visit is a claim the refugee makes upon the country which has received him; and the British Government has recognised this claim, and, therefore, grants the necessary facilities for his visit.

The other questions are questions of organisation. Appropriately, the machinery used is an adaptation of that set up for dealing with the refugees. Some account of it is given in this book. From the point of view of organisation the description may not wholly be without interest. But the point which I should like to emphasise is that at the back of this organisation lies a great deal of sympathetic thought and care bestowed both in its creation and working. It is a work in which Belgian and British minds have collaborated, and in which official persons and voluntary workers have both had their share. The Belgian soldier is in good hands. His thanks and those of the persons interested in him are due to friends in several quarters, and in particular I would mention:—

First, the Belgian Military Officers in this country, and especially Major Maton (Military Attaché, 1914); Lieutenant-General Orth, K.C.M.G., the first Chief of the Military Mission in London; his successor, Major-General Count de Jonghe d'Ardoye, A.D.C. to the King of the Belgians; and Captain Guy Reyntiens, M.C., Assistant Military Attaché.

Secondly, the Officers of the Local Government Board, especially Sir Horace Monro, K.C.B., who has always taken a personal, as well as an official, interest in all that relates to the well-being of the refugees in this country; Mr. F. J. Willis, C.B., who initiated the system of transport by which the soldiers come; and Mr. E. H. Rhodes, whose assistance has been invaluable.

Thirdly, the workers of the Transport Department and Embarkation Staffs, of the Bureau des Congés, and of the several voluntary societies, of whose devoted labours I have given some account in the body of this work and in the Appendix; and to the General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Corporation, Limited, in allowing their building to be used to receive Belgian Soldiers on arrival in London.

H. CAMPBELL,

Transport Superintendent.

December, 1917.

BELGIAN SOLDIERS AT HOME IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

INTRODUCTORY AND GENERAL.

TO grasp the full meaning of the title of this book it will be necessary to carry the reader's mind back to August, 1914, when Belgium made her appeal to the Powers to guarantee her neutrality, and to remember how that heroic little Belgian Army of 135,000 strong, under splendid leadership, faced an overpowering foe and so nobly defended Liège, Namur and Antwerp, eventually joining the armies of the guaranteeing Powers on the Yser.

Tactical retreating manœuvres will always take a prominent place in the history of this war, and, in spite of great losses and privations, it is a notable fact that not a single Unit of the Belgian Army was captured by the advancing enemy.

One can imagine the feelings of this little Army under adverse circumstances accomplishing a successful retreat, knowing that every mile of country forcibly surrendered meant suffering for the compatriots who had been left to their fate in the hands of an unscrupulous enemy, and hearing continually of the loss of many of their comrades who had given up their lives for their country; so intent were its people in scrupulously fulfilling the obligations imposed by its integrity, women as well as men taking an active part in defending their Country until such time as promised help arrived.

The many harrowing stories that were told of hair-breadth escapes are well within the memory of English people who welcomed the refugees on their arrival in London, as also the gratitude of the Belgian people at finding friends who so fully appreciated their trying and helpless position.

A full account of this work has been given by the Right Hon. Viscount Gladstone, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.B.E., in his Report of the War Refugees Committee, August, 1916. It will be sufficient here to say that the Transport Department of that Committee was responsible for the executive work of dealing with the arrival of the refugees from Belgium, and

took under its care and despatched to their destinations wounded soldiers and any other person whom chance or design directed into the same channel as the refugees. This was followed by the development of a scheme (to be described later) under which Belgian soldiers who had relatives and friends in England, were permitted to spend their period of leave in this Country. The arrangements for the transport of these men were also carried out by this department.

An example would be interesting to describe the special work of an organization which eventually led up to dealing with the soldiers :—Picture Holborn Station, one in the morning, a large influx of people, among the arrivals 200 Nuns, their only bodyguard two friars—not “Jolly Friars,” but men dressed as such, with a very grave expression, full of sorrow for themselves and for those poor souls whom it was their duty to convey to a place of safety. These women had been practically blown out of their Convent; and of their number were three old ladies who had recently undergone operations and had been jolted and borne in springless carts from their Convent to the Frontier. They had with them one joy and shining light, a little girl of three, whom they regarded (shall we say?) as a kind of human mascot, which they believed had saved their lives. She had been shot through both legs (let us hope it was a stray bullet only), but in spite of her sufferings was a cheery little soul, although so young, full of light and joy, and apparently pleased to find herself in such agreeable surroundings. Everybody gave her a pat on the cheek, but the Nuns carefully guarded her, as there were many English friends who were anxious to house one who was regarded as the happiest little refugee who ever arrived on these shores.

Space will not permit me to enter into the detail of the arrangements which had to be made to accommodate this unexpected arrival of the Nuns, but before the arrangements were completed a further problem had to be faced, viz. :—the disposal of 80 wounded Belgian soldiers who for some reason or other had escaped attention at the field dressing station and had found their way to England with the refugees. Many of them were unable to walk, and needed immediate attention, and after first aid had been given they were transferred to hospitals which fortunately were not so full as they are at the present time; it was not difficult, therefore, to have them received and cared for.

A pathetic case of the arrival of the Nuns has been given, but sad as this may be, a little relaxation was sometimes afforded by the refugees themselves. To quote an instance: there was a very old man with a long beard, wearing a typical tunic shirt, worn only by those of the class to which he belonged, and carrying many bundles tied up in what had

originally been white material. Directly he alighted, clinging to his bundles and finding in a cosy corner on the platform good temporary accommodation, he seated himself, and nothing would convince him that he could not obtain inclusive board and lodging for eighteenpence a week. Many endeavours were made to persuade him otherwise, which took from four in the afternoon till 11 o'clock in the evening. Eventually he was induced to go to an Institution, and when he was further convinced that free hospitality awaited him, he was still more pleased to shake off his attitude of independence.

These are instances of the many problems that had to be contended with for an unfortunate people, to take them somewhere, to be placed somehow, and given cover until more permanent arrangements could be made.

It was often thought that these scenes at the railway stations would be extremely interesting if staged—trains coming in, voluntary workers dealing with arrivals according to the plan of organisation set out, men, women and children, some of them hysterical, others crying for the friends they had lost, children homeless for the time, and it is feared, for the duration of the war, and many of them orphans. Then would follow the Nuns, wounded soldiers, and the like; in short, the trail of a deserted city. All of which gives rise to the question "Civilisation, civilisation, alas! what can be the real meaning of the word?" Since that time is it not true that nearly every home in the United Kingdom has been affected, directly or indirectly, as the outcome of this terrible war, making an emphasis of the picture of the refugees arriving unnecessary? Will not the memory of maimed men live with us at least during the present generation, thus producing a life-long picture?

As early as 1914, under British Government arrangements, Belgian wounded soldiers were brought to this country and admitted into English hospitals.

Before many months passed the wounded soldiers who had been received here were fit to be discharged, and for these accommodation had to be found. With the help of the Wounded Allies' Committee and Lady Glover, suitable homes for the more serious cases were arranged, and in this way upwards of 2,000 men were dealt with and employment for those who were able to earn their own living was obtained.

Eventually this section of the work was taken over by the King Albert's Hospital Committee, who in association with other Committees became responsible for the care of wounded and réformé Belgian soldiers.

Particulars of all men who were allocated by the Transport Department were eventually given to the Military Authorities so that arrangements could be made for the re-examination necessary to ensure that fit men should rejoin

their Unit. In this way it was possible to keep in touch with all the Belgian soldiers who arrived in England, either through the medium of the War Refugees Committee or other agencies, so that all could be dealt with by their own military organisation.

It might be thought that this would practically finish the work for soldiers undertaken by an organisation which had stepped into the breach to arrange and give immediate assistance, but the contrary proved to be the case.

About this time the Belgian Army, after a very hard struggle, had reached a point of comparative quiescence, and His Majesty the King of the Belgians, ever mindful of his subjects and knowing the concern of his men, was anxious for leave to be granted as soon as military exigencies permitted, in order that they might trace the whereabouts of their families and friends, many of whom might have arrived in this country.

Towards the end of 1914, a few soldiers arrived at Folkestone to take advantage of this short leave and anxiously enquired for their dependents. Being few in number they were treated as ordinary refugees, the Local Government Board's Representative at Folkestone (Mr. Leonard Franklin) looking after them, and providing them with food and travelling facilities to their destinations.

In the early part of 1915 the number increased. Mr. Franklin, having already foreseen the problem that he might have to grapple with, had made arrangements to keep as far as possible the soldiers' dependents together, and his account will explain the situation.

"Folkestone being in a prohibited zone, and residence of fresh Refugees being contrary to the regulations of the Police, arrangements were made through the kindness of the Glasgow Committee, to offer hospitality to the wives and mothers of soldiers, and temporary permission was obtained to grant free transport to soldiers visiting their families.

"When the granting of leave was assured to Belgian soldiers to visit their relations and friends, it was found that some were unable to take advantage of this as their families resided in the part of Belgium in occupation of the enemy. The sympathy of the British people for the gallant Belgian soldiers was aroused, and it was felt that those who had no country to which they could go or no relations in the allied countries, should have hospitality provided for them. It was, as before stated, not discreet to send soldiers to prohibited areas, and therefore enquiries had to be made as to nationality and respectability of those offering hospitality, it being felt that soldiers fresh from the Front might unwittingly allow information to leak out which would be harmful to military interest. It was then that the Transport

“Superintendent of the London War Refugees Committee took the matter in hand and arranged a system that is working extremely well, enabling the soldiers to be received in Clubs, Institutions, and hospitality generally all over the country, besides visiting the relatives who had found refuge in various parts of the United Kingdom.

“The arrangements made in London by the Transport Superintendent relieved the Folkestone Committee of all responsibility beyond providing transport for the soldiers to London, and for those who could not leave at once, shelter and food.”

At the London end the arrival of soldiers had created some concern. Apart from the few who could be directly connected up with their families, there were many others who came simply on a voyage of discovery; hoping against hope, and, in many cases, having to return to the Front sorely disappointed, only to renew their enquiries when opportunity again offered. The scenes at the railway stations at this time were particularly trying, and although everything was done in the interests of the men, yet it was obviously impossible to give definite information, as at this period of the war the registration of Belgian Refugees was in its infancy.

After the fall of Antwerp, the War Refugees Committee opened an annex to their main offices, known as the “Skating Rink.” In these offices a Registration Department was established; and in this manner information as to the whereabouts of relatives was given and the soldier was enabled to communicate with his friends who had received hospitality through the medium of this Committee. Many, however, did not receive satisfaction and roamed about the streets of London hoping to find some connecting link from refugees in the districts; these poor men were often brought into the Transport Department in an exhausted condition, without food, money or a place to go to. Truly a pathetic case.

When this was made known to one or two ladies and gentlemen every effort was at once put forth to make some provision for Belgian soldiers, similar to that which was available for the British soldiers, on the lines of the Union Jack Club. The Marchioness of Salisbury, to whom the situation was explained, at once placed her house at 20, Manchester Square, at the disposal of these men. This was the first house so used, and was afterwards known as “The British Club for Belgian Soldiers.”

The club (further particulars of which will be given later on) was subsequently transferred to 12, Connaught Place, London, W.

Those who came in personal contact with these soldiers alone know how trying was the ordeal of endeavouring to satisfy these men, who had bravely borne the brunt of the

battle, and were hoping to obtain relief from anxiety. Words fail to express what was experienced in witnessing the feelings of these battle-worn men who had not succumbed to the terrible hardships they had had to endure, but broke down in the office of one or other of the railway stations when no tidings could be given of those who were ever in their thoughts.

The majority of the men had to be housed, fed and provided with money, so that their few days' rest might be made as refreshing as possible.

The responsibility now became so great that it was considered necessary to approach the Belgian Military Authorities to make them aware of the trying situation. At this juncture it was regarded as work for a Military Department, and not to be undertaken entirely by a civil community. The question was therefore referred to the Belgian Military Authorities in England, who were not generally aware at this time that these men were coming to the United Kingdom on leave. Having had no official intimation, they could not offer any assistance, through lack of authorised funds and other facilities to cope with the situation.

As regards the cost of transport, it may be that our Belgian friends erroneously imagined that the railways were State-owned, as in Belgium, and that this would enable the soldier to travel free in search of his family.

There were many military and other questions involved besides the cost of transport, which already amounted to a considerable item. The regulations for aliens (including in a modified form alien friends) had come into existence restricting admission to certain areas, defined as prohibited areas, and dealing with other points included in what is known as the "Aliens' Restriction Order." There was also the necessity to secure that the soldier should reach his destination, be housed there, and return to duty.

It was obvious that efficient machinery had to be arranged to deal with these matters, and the steps taken will be considered in succession under the headings:—

- (1) The Transport Scheme.
- (2) The Military and Police Requirements relating to Aliens.
- (3) The Bureau Militaire des Congés.
- (4) Embarkation Staff, Folkestone; Transport Staff, London; and Gendarmes.
- (5) Hospitality.
- (6) Return to the Front.

A few further remarks have been added under the heading:

- (7) Man Power, Employment, and Military Service Laws.

(1) THE TRANSPORT SCHEME.

About the end of 1915 the demand for transport by sea was so great that it seemed doubtful whether Belgian soldiers would be permitted to come to these shores at all. Hitherto they had shared shipping facilities with their British comrades; but the future with regard to their travelling interests looked so gloomy that it was in contemplation that the whole of the Belgian Army would have to take its rest in France, to relieve the strain on our cross channel traffic.

As the Belgians were the guests of the British nation during the period of war, this possible difficulty with regard to their soldier relatives, added to their own sad experiences, would have had a depressing effect on the Belgians already receiving hospitality.

About this time the Transport Superintendent met by accident at the Railway Station an officer of the Belgian Army (Lieut. Armand Van Hoorde) who had made his way to this country as a convalescent and had, from the outbreak of war, exercised a very lively interest in the men of the army to which he belonged. Asked what he considered the feelings of his soldiers would be if they were not allowed to visit their friends who had made their homes here, his opinion was that "as they had borne such stout hearts throughout the war, he thought it would injure the morale of the troops."

This could well be believed by anyone knowing the feelings of the Belgian people, the first enquiry usually made on arriving from Holland being for tidings of their soldier relatives or friends.

In view of the blow that would be inflicted by cutting off the visit of the soldiers of the Belgian Army, an interview with Sir Francis Dent, the Manager of the South Eastern & Chatham Railway, was arranged. This gentleman, at all times alive to the feelings and claims of the Belgian people, at once appreciated the trying situation and felt that something must be done to relieve what would be a real disappointment to the nation's guests.

Sir Francis Dent, with Mr. Hayne, his most able assistant, who had already shown his appreciation of the movement, at once decided to take steps to convert two vessels then employed on the cargo service for passenger service, and in conjunction with the Admiralty, arranged for berthing these vessels at Folkestone Harbour. Considerable alterations were necessary to equip these two small vessels to meet the Board of Trade requirements for carrying troops. The work was immediately put in hand, accommodation for 300 men to come and return daily being thus provided. Needless to say, this concession was received most gratefully and it put the Department in a position to reply encouragingly to the many enquiries for

Military friends. Directly the daily arrival of troops had fallen off, it was erroneously predicted that the soldiers would not be allowed to come to this country: but the relatives of the soldiers were immediately pacified by the favourable decision given by the Management of the S.E. & C. Rly. Co.

Enquiries were then made as to who would meet the cost of Transport, this having already reached a considerable amount. The average cost was estimated at £2 8s. od. per man per day and it was difficult to imagine what the total would be under this heading before the Belgians would re-occupy their own country.

No Authority appeared to exist which would admit a liability for this outlay, the extent of which could not be gauged, and as the military work was still undefined the only information that could be gleaned was from two military officers who had unofficially attached themselves to this work. After permission had been obtained to approach the British Government on the subject, the two officers with the Transport Superintendent formed a deputation to seek direction and advice.

The deputation consisted of Major Cartuyvels de Collaert and Lieut. Van Hoorde representing the Belgian Military Authority and the Transport Superintendent to represent the Belgians resident in this Country. The afternoon appointed for the interview at the Local Government Board is one that will always be remembered by those whose privilege it was to present the case of the Belgian soldiers and their compatriots.

Mr. F. J. Willis, C.B., Assistant Secretary of the Local Government Board, together with Mr. E. H. Rhodes, of that Department, received the Deputation; the War Office was represented by Lieut.-Colonel (now General) H. O. Mance, D.S.O., and Mr. R. L. Coward.

The Transport Superintendent stated the case for the Belgian Officers and Belgians resident in the United Kingdom. The task was not a heavy one, as Mr. Willis—who had done so much for the Belgians, and was always ready to assist to carry out in its entirety the British nation's congenial and self-imposed obligation—gave kindly attention to the difficulties that had already arisen, and with the concurrence of Colonel Mance, undertook that the transport of Belgian troops on leave to this country should be officially sanctioned, and that the two cargo boats already promised should be placed at the disposal of these men; and, in referring the question of the cost of transport to Colonel Mance, he suggested that perhaps the men might be allowed to travel at single fare for return journey.

The Belgian Officers could not undertake to say without reference to their Government whether even this reduced

charge could be met by the Belgian Army. Mr. Willis proposed to give the question of cost further consideration and to recall the Deputation when in a position to give a decision. Only a few days elapsed before this Deputation was recalled and was informed that the British Government had considered the situation in which both soldiers and refugees found themselves placed and had decided to grant free travelling facilities, and thus place the Belgian soldier on the same footing as his comrade the British soldier, so enabling him to reach his temporary home to see friends and relatives, the cost being chargeable to the Local Government Board.

The happiness of the soldier, which practically depended on this grant of free travelling facilities, was therefore assured. Indeed the amount of joy and pleasure that has followed is inestimable, and on behalf of the soldiers their feelings of gratitude were expressed by the Belgian Officers to Mr. Willis, and the other Government Officers who had generously listened to their earnest appeal.

The appendix gives the number of soldiers who have arrived in London for a few days' leave and rest up to the end of December, 1917.

Attention is particularly drawn to the early period. It will be observed that between the months of January and June, 1915, the numbers were comparatively small, but from July, 1915, to January, 1916, until a definite organisation had been established the influx of anxious enquiries was so considerable that the burden was as much as could be contended with.

The arrival of soldiers on leave in the United Kingdom was now placed on an official basis, and a communication from the Local Government Board on behalf of the British Government was made to the Belgian Government through the Military Attaché in London, informing him that free travelling facilities had been granted and that the men might be permitted to come to the United Kingdom provided that the total number of 300 per diem was not exceeded. By a later communication this privilege was extended to Red Cross Nurses.

(2) THE MILITARY AND POLICE REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO ALIENS.

The provision for each soldier of a passport or other authority regularising his stay in this country was one of the first difficulties to be overcome. The soldier at the outset could not be treated differently from any other visitor, as his *bonâ fides* had to be proved, and it was necessary to be assured.

that he was a fit and proper person to be admitted to the United Kingdom, even though his residence there was to be only for a few days.

The soldiers accordingly arrived, some with passports and some without, and the latter were liable to be held up—a hardship, though a necessary one, where the leave given was very short.

When the Belgian Army took up its position on the Yser, the wish of His Majesty the King of the Belgians, as already stated, was to release the men to enjoy their well-earned rest ; yet to do so for a lengthened period would have meant absence from duty and might have proved detrimental from a military point of view. Hence, while this little army was coping with the difficulties which it had in hand, and at the same time co-operating with the Allied Armies, the leave given was necessarily short, and in very many instances only three days at a time could be granted. Taking into consideration the time it took to travel, which was naturally not always known to the Commandants, in many cases the soldier had only time to reach his friends and was obliged to leave again the same day.

It was very evident that some comprehensive scheme was required, in order to enable the soldier to travel with the minimum of impediment, and, at the same time, to comply with the regulations in this country and in France.

To arrange this, the various Government Departments had to be brought into consultation. On the subject of the authorisation to be given to the soldiers to come to this country and to travel within it, this being a military question, the War Office had to be approached, and also the Home Office, to meet Civil or Police requirements.

Major Sealy Clarke, of the War Office, and Mr. Moylan, of the Home Office, took this matter in hand ; both were conscious of the very great hardships the Belgians had endured and of the claims of the soldiers to see their friends in this country.

After the question had received their careful consideration a certain document was devised, known as a "Titre de Congé," or furlough pass, to combine both military and civil regulations. A specimen of this form is given in the Appendix.

Simple as this Titre de Congé now appears to be, yet it is sufficient to pass a *bonâ fide* soldier from the trenches and back again with the one condition that he must report to the Police Authorities his arrival from and departure for the Front.

The Belgian soldier, who has learnt to appreciate the necessity for regulations in war time, has often spoken in high praise of this document, printed in three languages, carrying a thumb mark of the owner, and so giving means of identifi-

cation, and in other respects complete and effective for its purpose.

The great advantage of the *Titre de Congé* being printed in three languages is that the Flemish soldier, equally with the Walloon and also with the British Police, can understand the contents of this document which establishes the *bonâ fides* of the holder.

In the early part of this work we find history repeating itself. As some of the men had already had enough of the discomforts of war it did not require much inducement to tempt a few of them to become absentees. Unfortunate as this is, yet it was to be expected, more especially in the case of strangers in a foreign country; desertion appeared easy; friends thinking, perhaps, that it was difficult for the Commandant to get in touch with his soldiers when so far away. This side of the question had also to be considered; and a further document, as shown in the Appendix, was prepared as a notification to the Local Police to meet a two-fold purpose.

This two-fold purpose is first to take the place of the telegram which in the early day it was necessary to send to inform the Police of the arrival of soldiers, in the case of prohibited areas but not elsewhere, and secondly to act as a safeguard for preventing desertion.

While doing away with the expensive and inefficient system of telegraphic information confined to certain areas only, the notification referred to gives full particulars to any place throughout the Provinces to which the man is going, of himself, the number of his *Titre de Congé*, or furlough pass, and the period of leave granted; so that any soldier not reporting his departure to time receives a gentle reminder from the Police that he is required to rejoin his Unit, and a more forcible reminder if he then fails to comply with these instructions. The effect of this document, which is posted off the same night as the soldier arrives, has, if not eradicated entirely, at least reduced the number of would be absentees or deserters to such a small percentage that comment is unnecessary.

All now went well till a spurious *Titre de Congé* was detected. Immediately this was seen it became necessary to examine every document most carefully and for this purpose the help of the Police was enlisted and action taken where there was any ground for suspicion.

Prevention being better than cure, it was then decided that all *Titres de Congé* must be printed in England to prevent any risk of a spurious *Titre de Congé* being employed; must be issued through a central office in England; must be registered in England; and must be signed by a responsible person before being issued to the Front; and in order to make it practically impossible that any fraud could be introduced

into this scheme it was further arranged that soldiers must reach this country by invitation only. An invitation form was then prepared so that every refugee desirous of receiving husband, father, friend or relative must apply in writing, and before this application is transmitted to the Central London Office the permission of the Chief of the Police of the area which the soldier is to visit must be obtained locally. This was made an imperative preliminary to the final preparation of the Titre de Congé centrally issued through the London Office.

As regards the area of the London Metropolitan Police District, in order to minimise the work in this overtaxed Department it was decided that the Police duties should be undertaken by the Transport Superintendent.

It may be observed in this connection that the convenience and comfort of the Belgian soldiers, consistent with Police and Military requirements, has at all times been considered, and as regards the Metropolitan Police Area, as it would mean a considerable expense for those whose pay is so small to go home first and then return to the office to report, all Titres de Congé for places in this area are collected at the port of disembarkation and conveyed in the same train as the soldiers; they are then despatched by means of a special official to the Transport Office, where the detail of the work is dealt with in advance, the documents registered and the men examined on arrival, if necessary.

(3) THE BUREAU MILITAIRE DE CONGÉ.

The more important and larger questions having now been settled, both as regards civil and military requirements, it then remained for the Belgian Authorities to undertake the necessary military duties inseparable from an organization of this kind. These refer principally to communications which would obviously have to be made through the Commanding Officers at the front, e.g., the grant of leave; the designation of the various Units comprising the Belgian Army; questions of discipline; extension of leave; certificates in cases of detention, etc.

The Bureau Militaire de Congé was therefore established, the first office of its kind ever set up in the British Isles, with Major Cartuyvels de Collaert as Commandant and Lieut. Van Hoorde, who has always worked indefatigably in the soldier's interest, as his immediate assistant.

It was essential for this office to be in close touch with the office of the Transport Superintendent; in fact, the successful work carried out has been entirely due to this co-ordination. This department had to be organised; it was the key of

the situation, inasmuch as the Titre de Congé was finally despatched to the front by Military workers in this office, after all the previous preparations, the form of application—see Appendix—and formalities had been completed.

The Belgian people soon became aware that this department existed and that forms of application could be obtained to invite their soldier friends to spend a few days' leave with them; but, as is always the case, a certain percentage of selfish people tried to over-ride all rules and regulations, and these would duplicate and often triplicate their application, would attempt to transpose names, and by every imaginable ruse try to get their soldier friends out of the trenches to be with them. There were also people who, although they were informed that their friends could only come over once in four months, insisted that their cases were exceptional and that the soldiers should be permitted to come over every two months, and so on. Another excuse was that a soldier having been permitted to come home for the purpose of marriage this did not constitute a part of his leave and should not be counted. In other cases the sickness of relatives was regarded as an exception to the rule, and so, as time went on, it was found necessary in order that leave should operate fairly without favour or distinction, and that the men at the Front should have equal opportunities, to start a system of checking and put a stop to possible irregularities.

Considering these various points, it was decided that a card index system was the only means to detect and prevent imposition. Another important item was that it had been found that the addresses given by the soldier's friends and copied on the Titre de Congé by Military assistants had given trouble, and owing to misdirection the men were sometimes put to inconvenience and loss of time. This is readily understood, for when one knows both the Flemish and French languages as spoken by the peasants in the country districts of Belgium it is conceivable that in filling in the application forms they often transpose the village for town, house for locality, and *vice versa*. In the district in which they reside it is invariably the custom to place the number of a house after the name of a town, village or street; this is so much the rule that directions in the majority of cases have to be revised and the correct addresses ascertained to ensure the soldier being sent off expeditiously and reaching his destination.

The Transport Department, therefore, undertook to be responsible for the initial stage of the Congé and to fill in the English addresses, while the Belgian Military Office completed the military address of the soldier and posted the document to the Unit.

The work in the Department of the Bureau Militaire de Congé, although started on a small scale, with a small staff

of two Officers, one wounded soldier and three volunteer assistants, has now grown to such an extent that it is with difficulty they are able to cope with the demand made on them and the staff at their disposal.

To give an idea of the work involved—up to the 30th August, 1917, 129,000 Congés have been prepared, registered and despatched. In the year 1916, 64,251 letters were received and answered, and during 1917 up to the 30th August last, 65,000 were dealt with. Some of these communications are perhaps simple to answer. Many are amusing, especially those received from the wife of the soldier. She would try to induce the Authorities to believe that the man's services could be better utilised in England than at the seat of war; and so insistent are some of the correspondents that often a reply-paid telegram arrives to ask when their military friends may be expected.

To those who know the state of mind of these unfortunate people and the trials and troubles they have already gone through, are they not to be excused for trying to obtain, perhaps, the only friends that may be left? There are orphans who have lost the whole of their family during this war, and are naturally desirous of seeing their military compatriots to gain some remnant of news, to lighten their unfortunate position. Each of these cases must be carefully investigated before giving effect to the requisition. So thorough are the investigations that when a specially deserving case is discovered every endeavour is made to bring relief, and more especially when the arrival of the soldier will bring about the only comfort that will satisfy the enquirer.

A number of pathetic stories could be told, but to give one very touching case:—a short time ago a soldier arrived who had to be rushed away from the railway station to the cemetery, only just in time to witness the interment of his wife. This poor man had also lost two children in Belgium as the outcome of a destructive bomb or other explosive during the advance of the enemy in the early part of the war.

So this busy little department pursues its work, day in, day out, and it is understood that not one of its staff, which is mainly comprised of wounded Belgian soldiers, assisted by voluntary workers, has been able to obtain leave. Often they are working on Sunday, as also are their co-workers in the Transport Department, knowing well what their work means to the soldier, whose life for over three years has had to be spent in the trenches, and whose only source of comfort and pleasure is to meet the few friends he may have residing in the British Isles.

It is a pleasure to place on record the most hearty co-operation and help that has been given by the department of the Bureau Militaire de Congé to the Transport Super-



MR. TOKE AND PERSONAL STAFF, FOLKESTONE.



LADY VOLUNTARY WORKERS, REFRESHMENT BUFFET, FOLKSTONE

intendent and his Staff; in cases of doubt they have never found it a trouble to give a ready reference, or to withhold leave to those whom it is considered it would be unwise to allow to come to this country.

It must be admitted that such an organisation as this is unique, and could only come into existence under circumstances similar to those experienced during the last three years. The main difficulty that had to be encountered was to place the Belgian soldier on the same footing as the British soldier, and at the same time to meet the conditions imposed by the regulations of dealing successfully with our alien friends, so that we could guarantee all men of this allied army who were passing through military zones into a country where munition workers are "doing their bit" hastening on the end of this terrible struggle. The question of giving facilities only to the persons for whom they were intended was one of grave concern. Much thought and consideration was therefore necessary to be able to give assurance to the Authorities that every arrival could be vouched for, before the men were passed rapidly from the trench to their temporary homes, and steps taken for informing the Police and guaranteeing their return. Every detail had to be thoroughly worked out in order that the chances of fraud might be not only reduced to a minimum, but placed without the bounds of possibility.

Such is the organisation set up, which experience and tests have proved to be efficient.

(4) EMBARKATION STAFF: FOLKESTONE.

To give a general account of the Staff employed in connection with the Transport of the soldiers on this side of the Channel, it will be necessary to start at the port of disembarkation, and in the main Folkestone is the port employed.

The work at Folkestone was originally organised by Mr. Leonard Franklin, who has been mentioned above. He was a representative of the Local Government Board, and a well-known figure, especially in the early part of the war, for the great help he rendered to the Government in dealing with the reception of the refugees at Folkestone, and later in organising the arrangements for the Belgian soldiers there.

He was succeeded by Mr. Dobbs, who improved the system as opportunity offered, and finally handed over the work to Mr. Toke, who with Mr. Dumas, now carries out the Folkestone requirements.

Mr. Dumas' task is not a light one; in the early days before the Harbour restrictions and Channel regulations were tightened, vessels usually ran at a regular time; since then it has become a tidal service, and the hours of waiting are not

only tedious, but the work of clearing Folkestone oftentimes runs well into a late hour of the night or early morning.

To a casual reader the work of embarking troops would appear to be a very simple operation, but it is, on the contrary, one of anxiety and responsibility. Imagine the scene in rough weather, say at 4 a.m. on a winter morning, pitch dark, one hurricane lamp, the transport rolling badly, the shore end of the gangway at one moment high in the air, at another perilously near the end of the pier. This nerve-racking situation may at all times have to be faced to ensure the safe landing and embarking of soldiers arriving at Folkestone. The embarkation officer must also take into consideration the weather for crossing, and adjust the number of passengers to be carried accordingly.

It sometimes happens, and for obvious reasons, that the Channel service is suspended. This brings about a congestion which must be met; and through the kindness of Sir Stephen Penfold, the Mayor of Folkestone and Chairman of the Education Committee, one of the schools has been placed at the disposal of the Folkestone Committee for the temporary housing of Belgian soldiers.

Great help has also been given by the Town Clerk, the Borough Treasurer, and Mr. Wilkinson of the Education Committee, in solving any difficulties from a housing point of view that have presented themselves. In addition to which the Salvation Army authorities have always been pleased to lend their barracks for the use of the Staff, and on various occasions have fed and housed large numbers of men.

Great assistance has also been given by the Embarkation Staff at Folkestone Harbour, under the direction of Colonel Aytoun and Major Noblett, who have both made the way easy in expediting the passing of the men to the authorities to be dealt with. Chevalier d'Ydewalle was placed at the disposal of the Folkestone Staff as Interpreter and General Assistant; this combined duty is now carried out by Mr. Dumas.

Mr. Romney, the Superintendent of the Harbour, who had always been a valuable help in granting railway facilities, lent a room to the Staff which enabled the work of distribution to be carried out with rapidity and despatch.

Originally the soldiers had to be divided into three categories:—

- (1) For Folkestone and towns South of London.
- (2) For London.
- (3) For the Provinces.

Those who had to remain in Folkestone were marched to a building known as the "Rink," where the men were provided with sleeping accommodation. Those who had to continue their journey were divided into two batches, one for London the other for the Provinces.

Later modification has brought about that these soldiers do not require to undergo this division. The Titres de Congé are marked according to whether the men are to remain in Folkestone or be passed to London, and the issue of the railway ticket automatically brings about this division.

Feeding troops is always a question of concern. It is well known even to the casual observer that Free Buffets are established throughout London at all railway stations to feed soldiers who are taking a railway journey. In the case of Belgian soldiers, if they were permitted to journey to London without obtaining refreshments (prior to proceeding to the Provinces) it would not only congest the Buffets, but would bring about chaos and delay in arranging for the final portion of their journey.

Apart from this, a still more serious question had to be considered. They were aliens not understanding the language; it was not difficult to imagine that they would soon be lost in the hubbub of a London Railway Terminus, apart from the temptations they might encounter. It was therefore decided that if these men were fed on arrival at Folkestone it would relieve the congestion at the London end and assist in their expeditious despatch. The soldiers are, therefore, first fed and then directed to the clearing room to entrain for London.

The feeding arrangements at Folkestone were organised by Miss Weston. They are now carried on under the supervision of Miss Stainer. In the Appendix is a list of the ladies at Folkestone who have devoted themselves to this work since the beginning of the war.

Their task is to prepare food for and distribute it among 400 or 500 hungry Belgian soldiers daily—and this for seven days in the week, winter and summer alike, only one small hurricane lamp being allowed, owing to the bombing activities of Brother Boche.

For over three years these ladies have consistently worked voluntarily at the harbour under the most trying circumstances with one desire only, to give a warm welcome to men arriving from the trenches, and having their only recreation for the period of the war.

The premises in which rations for these men are prepared consist of a large well-lighted room. This room is called the "Cutting Room," because all bread, meat, etc., is cut up here. In it are two large vats or cauldrons heated by gas for making coffee, and two long wooden tables, where these ladies turn bread, margarine, and meat into sandwiches at lightning speed. Behind the room is another which is used as a store-house and behind all the scullery, etc.

In bad weather the men are admitted to these rooms, but in ordinary weather they receive their food in a covered way protected by a glass roof. In addition to this accommodation

the Committee have the use of the Grill Room of the Pavilion Hotel, situated on the Harbour, fitted with long tables and forms and capable of seating 70 or 80 men. All Belgian soldiers returning to France "en retour de congé" are also fed here. In the basement are similar vats to those in the cutting room, but in this case heated by steam: all food is prepared in the cutting room and conveyed by a Belgian Orderly on a handcart.

Weather permitting, the food is served from a rough buffet comprised of boxes and a long station seat. The methods are rough and ready, but the essentials are there, viz., that the men are fed, and well fed, after which they are passed on to a train in waiting.

TRANSPORT STAFF, LONDON.

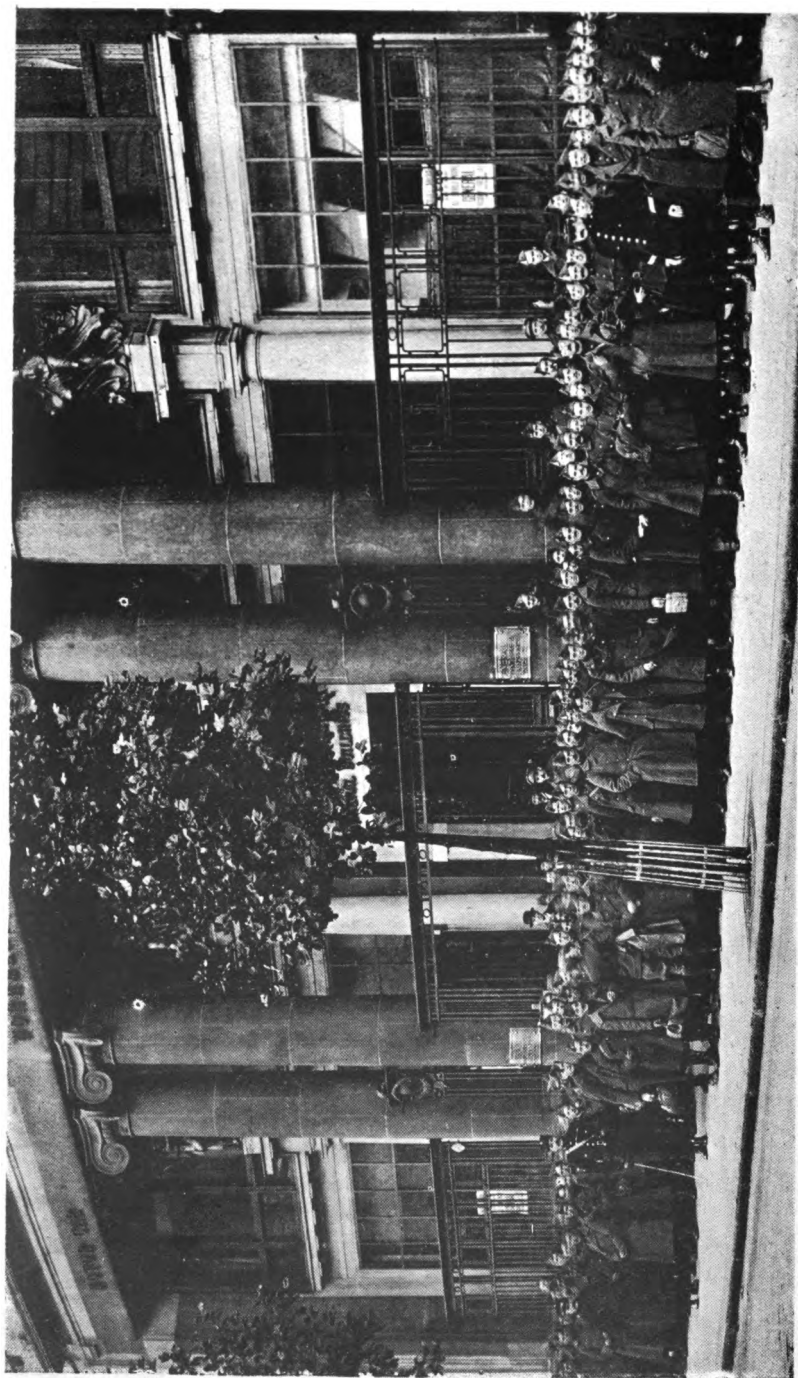
The real pivot of the work, on which so much depends, is at Victoria Station, or at the office of the Transport Superintendent. Arrangements are made, so far as possible, for all Belgian soldiers to arrive at Victoria, but the station of arrival is of secondary importance; and this depends on what arrangements can be made at Folkestone, viz.:—whether the men can accompany the British troops in the ordinary leave train, or, owing to this being congested, have to be accommodated on a passenger train; in the latter event Charing Cross is generally used, though on several occasions they have arrived at Holborn.

Belgian soldiers must submit themselves to the necessary examination, in accordance with the arrangements set out, and in the second place must receive instructions in their own language before being sent off to their homes. Formerly they were entrusted with their own furlough forms, or Titres de Congé, but as this was not found satisfactory, all these documents are now collected as previously stated at the Port of disembarkation, and handed over to an officer or non-commissioned officer who accompanies the party to London.

This ensures that each soldier will not only be seen, but that he will receive at the hands of an official his Titre de Congé at the London end. The men are met by a Gendarme or by a non-commissioned officer of the Belgian Army, who conducts them to the office, either at Victoria Station, where a room has been kindly placed at the disposal of the Transport Superintendent by the South Eastern & Chatham Railway authorities, or, in the case of arrival at Charing Cross to General Buildings, Aldwych, the office of the Transport Superintendent; where all formalities are completed and railway warrants, where necessary, issued.



TRANSPORT DAY AND NIGHT STAFF, LONDON. INSET—TRANSPORT SUPERINTENDENT.



TRANSPORT OFFICE. GENERAL BUILDINGS, ALDWYCH, LONDON.

This would appear to be a very lengthy proceeding, and there have been occasions when, the question being raised, those of an enquiring mind have been invited to witness the operation. Intricate as it may appear, by the method set out it becomes one of mere routine and machinery. Perhaps at this stage it would be interesting to see what is really done.

An official of the Transport Department takes over the envelope containing the Titres de Congé of the men, and hastens along to the office, usually arriving, in the case of Charing Cross, ten minutes or a quarter of an hour before the soldiers. The Staff of the office is divided up into five units. One assistant receives immediately the Congés of the men remaining in the London Police Area, as the Transport Superintendent acts as the responsible Police Authority for this area, a duty assigned by the Chief Commissioner of Police. The London forms are then stamped and recorded in the Police Book. A quarter of an hour, or at the outside half an hour will complete this operation, which would take a novice considerably longer. The Congés are then handed to the Gendarme, who identifies each man with the particulars shown on the document; he is then set free for the remainder of his leave period, with the exception that it is an obligation that he must report his departure before returning to the Front and present his Titre de Congé, if required, on demand by a competent authority.

Another section prepares the Police papers for the Provinces, the particulars of which are taken from the Congé. For specimen see Appendix. The Congé or furlough document is then passed to the section looking up times of trains; this information is transmitted to a special sheet, giving time of departure from the London station, and arrival at destination, and also the departure train for the Front. A sample of this train document (which is given in three languages) is included in the Appendix.

In the early days it was not an uncommon thing to be inundated with applications from the Public offering their services as guides to the soldiers. The unfortunate man was often misdirected. Even at the railway stations it was a frequent occurrence for a man to be put in an "inner circle" train and to go round and round the circle until some kind individual found out by accident at which station he required to alight. The train direction already described, though simple and plain, gives him an air of independence, and seldom is it necessary for him to make inquiries, as was the case in the past. It is now rare to find a soldier who has lost his way, or to receive complaints from the public that the Belgian soldier has travelled about either the City or the Provinces as lost.

The train direction is then passed, together with the Titre de Congé, to the railway clerk, who in turn prepares a warrant or voucher to enable the soldier to reach his destination.

The three documents, viz., Titre de Congé, train direction, and warrant or railway pass, are then handed to the officer, who identifies the man, obtaining an oral reply as to where he is going and the name of the arrival station. All being in order, the men are then allowed to proceed on their journey. Two hundred men can be dealt with in this way in under one hour.

The last duty to be attended to is money changing. Payments in France are made in the coinage of that country; French money is therefore required to be changed into English. The Department regard it as part of their duty to ensure that the soldier shall not be cheated, and that he may obtain the full advantage of the current rate of Exchange. The Belgian Minister, who at all times has shown a lively interest in the welfare both of refugees and soldiers, kindly arranged through the financial department of his office for a sum of money to be placed in the bank, to be used for this purpose.

A comparison may be made of the amount of money which the soldier now brings to the Exchange Bureau and that which he used to bring. In the early days of the war a hundred men would on an average bring money to the value of £6. At the present time, in spite of the limitation of 30 francs of the amount which any man is allowed to exchange, the demand works out at approximately £50 for one hundred men.

An explanation has often been asked as to why there is this difference, and on investigation it is found that, whereas in the early days the refugees were without money, they have since availed themselves of the opportunity of employment in this country and become independent. They are, therefore, in a position to help their soldier relatives at the front. It is one of the interesting features that has been learnt concerning the Belgians during the war that by custom, if not indeed by Belgian law, the dependents of families assist and help to support each other in times of need. There may be a laxity in this respect in assisting other members of the civilian population, but it is good to be able to state that the soldier has benefited by this arrangement and his allowance is thus considerably augmented.

While touching on the financial side of the work, it may be mentioned that in 1915 and early in 1916 it was necessary to collect sufficient funds to assist the soldier with money to cover incidental expenses. Over 50 per cent. of the men in early days were in great need, but now it is rare to find a soldier without money, little as it may be, and only one per

thousand is absolutely penniless. One may also observe an improvement in the general appearance of the men, their demeanour and appearance speaking for themselves.

Many British people, anxious to give hospitality to the Belgian soldiers, make remarkable demands on the Staff. In one case a lady wrote, "I am receiving a Belgian soldier, will you please give me a certificate to say that he has had a bath and a change of underclothing before proceeding."

In other instances personal enquiries are made respecting the man's moral conduct, and whether a guarantee can be given that he is a fit and proper person to whom to give hospitality and to dine at his host's table. These questions oftentimes are not asked until the eve of the soldier's arrival, and the host has to stand by the invitation.

It is very common for soldiers to present letters at the bureau couched in most endearing terms, as for instance, from a would-be lover who has never seen her hoped-for admirer before. In another case a domestic servant wrote and stated that she had written to the Belgian Army and a soldier had promised to marry her. Every night she had been looking out for her expected visitor, but he had not yet arrived. Could a description of the man be given so that she could identify him?

Not an unusual occurrence is for the soldiers to think that they can reach Paris by way of London. So in looking after our alien military friends, the duty thrown on the workers is not all of an ordinary kind, and to say the least of it, it is sometimes difficult to give satisfaction to the many demands made.

The workers in the Transport Department must be well trained and good linguists, so as to be able to accept responsibility and give decisions and advice as occasion requires. The majority of the members have been connected with War Refugee work since the commencement of the war; at that time untrained, they are now by experience competent to control and direct; indeed it would be impossible to find substitutes in the labour market. The results speak for themselves, a staff of four men and four women dealing in a period of two years with 121,000 soldiers, each man reaching his destination without undue difficulty or delay—truly an example of the solution of a much talked of problem, "man power in relation to output." If a comparison may be made, a mechanical engine can be built by measurement to ensure a certain output of energy, and so the human power can be trained by education and experience to give a known result. Education, initiative, willingness, general knowledge and discipline are probably essential factors. Standardisation should be discouraged and general adaptability encouraged. May this however be submitted as an example in adjusting commercial labour requirements of the future?

The night staff is composed of a mixed nationality, all speaking English, French, and several Flemish, fluently. By day they are employed as paid assistants on the War Refugee work, in the evening their time is devoted entirely and voluntarily to military duties. Although the workers are of mixed nationality, including Belgians, the work is not undertaken entirely as of one Belgian interest—any other nation might have found itself in this predicament—but one of humanity; this is the keynote which engenders interest. In these circumstances and for this purpose the workers are of one nationality in the cause of humanity helping those who are actively engaged in winning the war, aiming at one result, “the Peace of Nations,” truly each one in his or her capacity doing his or her “bit.”

A great physical strain is thrown on night workers. The military service, as already explained, is a tidal one, and the times of arrival of troops revolve : *i.e.*, trains arrive at midday, each day becoming later, until midnight is reached and sometimes early morning hours, and so for a fortnight until the tide serves again for midday arrivals. In other words, the staff cannot reach their homes on four days in a fortnight till long after midnight. This goes on month by month without rest or intermission, and often they must long to know when the war will end and finish a self imposed but trying task, voluntarily undertaken and cheerfully carried out.

The day workers, equally with the night staff, are devoted to the work of preparing the necessary documents and answering the numerous enquiries that pass through the office, in addition to which the scrutiny of the applications, dry as it may be, does not escape interest.

The names of the members of both day and night staff of the Transport Department are given in the Appendix.

GENDARMES.

Through the kindness of the Chief of the Military Mission, assistance has been ably rendered by the Belgian Gendarmes; this has considerably relieved the pressure on outside work, as the soldiers in many instances must be directed to the train or omnibus which they should take to reach a connecting station, or directions must be given where the residence in London is off the main road. It is encouraging to know how quickly, in spite of the language difficulties, these useful men picked up the geography of the Metropolis. After one or two lectures on local train, bus and tram services, no difficulty is now experienced in answering elementary questions, and for the more difficult problems the staff of the transport is always at their disposal.

On the arrival of the troop train at Victoria Station the Gendarmes post themselves at two important points where they are conspicuous, and also at the Underground Station. These positions are known to the soldier, who is enabled to find his way without the assistance of a kindly disposed public, who are not always able to give the direction necessary.

In addition to these duties a Non-commissioned Officer is posted at Waterloo, Charing Cross and Victoria Stations throughout the day entirely in the soldier's interest, answering questions as to train services and directing the men in case of need. The duties thus carried out are invaluable; in very many instances in the past the public, not understanding the Belgian soldier's request, directed him to various offices, in consequence of which he often lost his train, or failed to meet an important military obligation.

(5) HOSPITALITY.

It is impossible to realise the full scope of the word hospitality as applied to the Belgian soldier on leave, and to do justice to every committee and interest throughout the country; and this may be a fitting opportunity to apologise for any omission in not making special mention of each individual Committee in the Provinces, and at the same time to express the gratitude of the London Organisation for the great help that has been given by all interested in this very deserving work; and also to the Chief Constables for their hearty co-operation with the various local bodies. The fact that requests are made from principal manufacturing centres that the soldier should arrive at an hour of the day enabling him to be met is an indication of the warm welcome that awaits him.

BRITISH CLUB FOR BELGIAN SOLDIERS.

The British Club for Belgian Soldiers may be regarded as the parent institution and the first of its kind in the United Kingdom. No. 20, Manchester Square, lent by the Marchioness of Salisbury for this purpose in June, 1916, was soon found too small to meet the ever increasing demand. Mrs. Verney, having heard of the need, kindly placed at the disposal of the Committee 12, Connaught Place, a most adaptable residence overlooking Hyde Park, where from the top rooms of the house an excellent view of London can be obtained. How truly thankful the soldiers are is daily expressed when they find themselves comfortably housed in the beautiful light high rooms, with one of London's finest pictures as an outlook.

There is sleeping accommodation for forty-five men in this house, and there are also excellent billiard, writing, concert and sitting rooms, and an admirably arranged buffet on the first floor, where light refreshments are served in good style.

A roomy basement provides the dining rooms where 150 men are served with a good dinner.

The Club also provides well appointed bath and washing rooms, which are greatly in demand on the soldier's arrival from the trenches.

The names of the Committee are given in the Appendix : they work under the Presidency of the Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton (well known for her great interest in War Refugees), and the Executive Control is under the capable management of Miss Bidwell. Unavoidable circumstances have necessitated a change in the Hon. Secretaryship : Miss Louisa Feilding and Captain Barton, C.M.G., have filled the office with conspicuous devotion, and the responsibility now falls on the Hon. Robert Boyle.

The commissariat department is entrusted to the care of ladies who without stint of time or energy are always willing to give of their best, maintaining that ideal self-denial which has been one of the greatest features of the war. Their names are given in the Appendix.

Mrs. Melville O. Ashworth, a member of the Belgian and British Red Cross Societies and Commandant of the Club, has given up her whole time and interest to this military cause since the commencement, and under her capable direction the need of the soldier is well looked after.

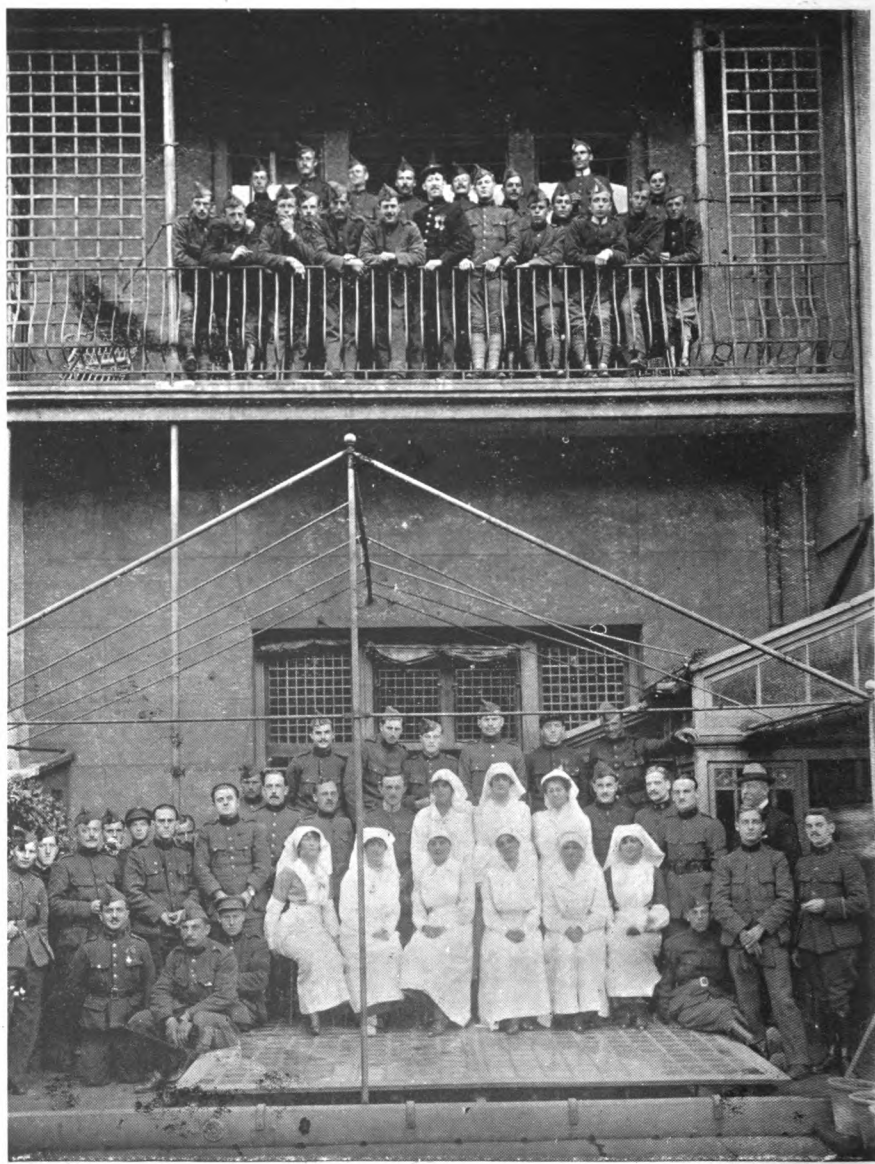
One of the principal objects of the Club is not only to provide creature comforts for the men, but to offer counter attractions to the temptations predominating in a great city, especially during a war.

In spite of the precautions taken it was found that the Belgian soldier had succumbed at times to these temptations, and it was under serious consideration whether he should be granted leave from the rest camps, as his military efficiency was being impaired. It was thought that he found himself in undesirable company during the time he was awaiting his train connection, varying from one to four hours.

To combat this evil it was suggested that military pressure should be brought to bear on the men, and in cases where they cannot proceed direct, that they should be advised to spend their waiting time at the Club. At first the men thought that this was taking away a certain amount of freedom, but the attractions of the Club soon removed all difficulties, and the men now regard it as a home away from home, and in this way it would not be a stretch of imagination to say that a national work has been undertaken, and that the soldier



THE HONORARY SECRETARY, COMMANDANT AND STAFF OF THE BRITISH CLUB
FOR BELGIAN SOLDIERS, LONDON



BRITISH CLUB FOR BELGIAN SOLDIERS, 12, CONNAUGHT PLACE W.

now returns not only fit for duty but in an improved physical condition.

On arrival in London the men are given a card with full instructions how to reach Connaught Place (see Appendix).

The Club has also undertaken the work of getting in touch with the families of the soldier now in the part of Belgium occupied by the enemy, which has been pursued with excellent results. This alone has made a wonderful impression, as in the ordinary course of events the men, in all probability, would not have heard of their kith and kin till the cessation of hostilities.

The soldier is thoroughly at home passing in and out of the Club at all hours of the day from the time of opening till 11 p.m., the time for closing, excepting on the occasion of late arrivals, when the hours are extended to meet a special need. Of the 125,000 soldiers who have passed through London the majority have received food, help and advice through the medium of the Club.

Of this number 105 per day can be regarded as resident members during their period of leave; they receive their meals on the premises, and 60 of them are lodged at 20, Manchester Square, by a Committee specially interested in that establishment, while in addition from 200 to 300 men receive a hot meal at the Club daily.

The doors are also open to Belgian soldiers employed in a military capacity in the London District, better known to the ladies as "Legation Men;" they are generally wounded soldiers. These men are happy to fraternise with their comrades, with whom, perhaps, they have fought side by side in the trenches, the meetings often being in the true Continental fashion.

The beds at the Club are specially given to soldiers who otherwise would not have been able to benefit by a change, having no friends in this country, nor means permitting them to take a holiday in France. Many hearts are therefore gladdened, and it is only the men themselves who can realise what this means. A glimpse of their pleasure can be obtained when in a broken-hearted way they tell their tale of woe and despair concerning their families and friends left behind in Belgium. The most that can be done, little as it is, is to make their short stay enjoyable.

Further to accommodate these specially deserving cases, the Camberwell Committee, through the kindness of Miss Bower, receives 20 to 30 men at 36, Camberwell Green.

The financial responsibility for the British Club for Belgian Soldiers, which includes the cost of giving the men free food, is considerable, and could not be undertaken without help. The establishment charges, apart from the cost and supply of food, are heavy, and the Paddington Borough

Council have very kindly agreed not to levy rates so long as it is used as a Belgian Soldier's Club.

The Working Men's Belgian Fund has, during the past twelve months, been a great mainstay of the Club, and without the assistance of the British working man it would have been difficult to continue this useful undertaking. Many other friends in sympathy with the work have gladly afforded practical help.

The help given has been far reaching, avoiding the employment of special propaganda, so that our soldier has not been made the object of charitable appeals, and has therefore felt free to accept the benefits afforded, which have connected him with the heart of a people whose interests are united with his.

Invaluable help from the commencement has also been given by the National Food Fund. In the early part of the war, before the needs were so pressing, the Committee of this Fund generously granted a supply on the basis of 50 rations per day, and very shortly afterwards increased the grant to 150 rations per day, or in other words defrayed half the cost of the food supplied to our military guests. The splendid work done by this Committee (see Appendix) is well known, and it is only necessary to emphasise the fact that they are ever willing to give ready help where it is needed.

The daily arrival of the men at the Club is most interesting. The Commandant, who is the idol of the men, awaits her new guests with a reception once seen not to be forgotten. Every soldier receives a warm shake of the hand and is then passed on to the military helpers—two wounded Belgian soldiers—who direct them to take off the first coat of trench mud or dust before partaking of the hot meal in readiness.

In a few minutes the men are comfortably seated, waiting to enjoy a substantial repast. The expression on their faces is an index to their happiness. The army of ladies carrying out their duty, as if by drill book, under the supervision of the Commandant, pass out the soup and the other good things which follow, at the same time keeping an eye on any man who does not appear to have found an appetite. Should there be such a case, as oftentimes happens, enquiries are at once made in the language best known to the soldier. If it is a case of *mal de mer* he is treated, and in other cases—sometimes the result of wounds—first aid has to be applied. So the work proceeds apace, each day bringing its own particular task. After the meal has been served, the ladies invite the men to the buffet and sitting-room, to answer questions the men wish to ask, or to give such general information as a visitor may be expected to require. Advice is often given at this stage by the popular Secretary, who is just as much at home with the French language as with his own.

In addition to serving the men with food the ladies arrange, especially on wet evenings, Bohemian Concerts and indoor amusements. Throughout the year the men are entertained one or two evenings a week in this way. Hidden talent is often discovered, and in turn the men take great pleasure in entertaining the ladies, to the amusement of all.

Numerous letters are received by the Commandant and her staff, proving that the men really value the hospitality, care and comfort afforded them. The following are typical of many :—

"I should have been so very pleased to see you again before leaving England, but I only heard this morning I must go in the afternoon, so that last pleasure, I shall not have it, and be sure it is a great pain for me. But I should like for nothing to leave England without thanking you once again for the kindness you showed me all the time I spent at the British Club. Nor shall I forget you, nor shall I forget Miss ———. I don't know what God wants of me, but if he wants my blood for the liberation of my poor country, I shall give it with joy, but if I die I should like to have a last thought for all there who did put in my life a little happiness, a little joy and a little love, and to die with a last feeling of love towards them."

"I write to try and thank you for the very great kindness that the ladies of your Club have shown to a soldier for whom I had asked an invitation. He had had no news of his wife and children since the very beginning of the war, and was becoming very depressed and discouraged. He came to see me on his way back to the front. He was enchanted with his stay in London, and could not sufficiently express his gratitude for the most wonderful kindness he had received. He said he felt a different man, his courage and patience had returned, and he would never forget his visit to London, it would always remain a bright spot in his life."

"I hasten to thank you of all my heart for all you have done to make my stay at your Club so agreeable and so charming. My pen is unable to tell how sincerely happy I felt during this few days. Allow me to say that a leave, under such conditions, is not only interesting, but it is an ideal rest and even a revival of the dear old family life we enjoyed almost three years ago."

The following letter, one of many addressed to the Secretary, shows the difference which it makes to a man arriving rather disconsolately in a foreign country to meet with the warm welcome of the Club :—

"Dear Sir,—I have pleasure in telling you that I have joined my regiment safe and sound, but the physical discomforts are little when the "Morale" is good, and mine is most excellent, thanks to you, Sir.

When I arrived in London, the bad weather and my ignorance of the English language made me feel rather sad and sick of life.

Fortunately, I was able to meet you at the British Club for Belgian Soldiers, one of the finest institutions instituted by England. I do not know whether our faces showed that we were rather unhappy and wanted just a good heart and a warm arm to lean upon. But anyway you soon solved the problem, and did your very best to make us forget our troubles, and I am sure that the friends we have left behind would be most relieved to know your charitable people take an interest in all their affairs, and their children from whom they are so cruelly separated, and so make this separation less painful. In their name I thank you, Sir, for all you have been good enough to do for me, and please accept my most respectful and devoted wishes."

As regards the behaviour of the men, the Commandant reports:—"I cannot speak too highly of their conduct: they "have been respectful in the extreme, and I have not had an "instance of a complaint from any of the ladies under my "charge, and above all I could not have wished for any "better behaviour, and shall ever remember the Belgian soldier "as an exceptionally fine man."

The Hon. Robert Boyle, who took over the duties of Hon. Secretary at the end of 1916, was not long before he reached the hearts of the soldiers. Being a traveller of considerable experience and a distinguished linguist, he made the Christmas of 1916 a record one in the history of the Club. With the help of the Commandant and her ladies, parties were organised for pantomimes, cinemas, etc., and the first appearance on the films of the Tanks enabled the soldiers to take back with them some small idea of the wonderful new war machine, so terrible to the enemy at the battle of the Somme. The people's entertainment, the cinema, is especially attractive to those who cannot understand the English language. If it were not for the kindness of the Management of the London cinemas, and especially the West End Cinema and Philharmonic Hall, Messrs. Maskelyne & Devant, and the Coronet Theatre, the Belgian soldiers would have been deprived of much of their evening's amusement: such occupation of the mind has been of the greatest value. Organised excursions are arranged by Belgian ladies, the men having an opportunity to visit the principal places of interest under the care of competent guides. The Zoological Gardens and Madame Tussauds have proved special attractions.

The Secretary writes that the bearing of the Belgian soldier is very reticent. He says—"They are a shy lot, often "not responsive at first. You say—"Would you like an after- "noon in the country?" They hesitate and they do not realise "what it means. You persuade them and they come, some "twenty at a time. Then they arrive there in such almost "childish happiness. Games of ball, skittles, tossing the hay, "races and games. In this way you get to know the soldier "intimately; when in a pathetic way he will tell of his "innermost thoughts, and the trouble continually with him "during his lonely hours of vigil in the trenches. Can too "much be done for this poor man? Here are a few typical "instances: One man says, 'My wife I have heard is dead, "my children are left with no one to look after them.' "Another says, 'My wife has been shot by the Germans "because she would not allow them to live in our home.' "Another Belgian woman writes to her husband, 'I am so "thin you would not know me;' and such are the tales of "woe given daily to sympathetic hearers; unfortunately, one "knows they are only too true."

A striking feature of the Club's entertainment is the **Sunday Evening Concerts**, under the joint management of **Madam Carton de Wiart** and **Miss Bidwell**. These entertainments are of exceptional interest. Belgian artistes of great talent and devoted to their compatriots come week after week to give a treat to the soldiers. Amongst the ladies and gentlemen who generally give their services are the following:—**The Hon. Mrs. Robert Lyttelton, Monsieur Deffautt, Mesdames Parys, Mertens, Forgeur, Gaby Darmon, Galerne, Thompson; Messieurs Osselli, Crommelynck, Montbars, Bicquet** and others. Surely no heartier cheers have ever proclaimed popular favourites, and what the audience lacks in numbers it atones for in enthusiasm.

Their Excellencies **Monsieur and Madame Hymans**, as also **Monsieur Carton de Wiart** and other ladies and gentlemen from the Legation, and **General de Jonghe d'Ardoye, A.D.C.**, Chief of the Military Mission, have often given their patronage, speaking a kindly word to the soldiers, in whom they take a very great personal interest.

The Secretary truly writes:—"I only wish that more people would get to know the Belgian soldier. When one hears them talk so simply, so naturally of what they are trying to do, and when one realises what the fathers, mothers and sisters of these men are suffering (one man showed me a postcard from his family, hitherto cheerful and trying to encourage him, which says, 'Now we are beginning to be hungry'), surely we must try and do what we can for them."

LES VACANCES DU SOLDAT BELGE.

On the outbreak of war as is well known that many philanthropic committees and institutions came into existence to meet the pressing needs of the nation, and just as our British soldiers' interest was studied, so this account has endeavoured to explain how our Belgian soldiers were equally considered. The work thrown on the British Club for Belgian Soldiers was so great that similar institutions were truly welcome to extend the activities already started and enable the benefits to be far-reaching.

A capable Committee (see Appendix) was soon formed under the distinguished patronage of the **Duchess of Vendôme**, to give effect to the wishes of brave **King Albert**, who knew the need of rest and change to men, all of whom had been robbed of their homes and many of them of their friends and relatives. It was in this latter class that this Committee were specially interested, and 20, Manchester Square, having been vacated by the British Club for larger premises, the

Marchioness of Salisbury graciously extended her kindness and gave her house for the special use of this Committee.

The Home was soon filled with soldiers who had no address to proceed to, separated as they were from their families, and without means. It was a wise and humane undertaking, fitting as a small acknowledgment for the zeal and courage of those humble and disinherited defenders of their country.

No. 20, Manchester Square, is a fine house situated in a fashionable part of London and fitted with 57 beds. There 3,000 men have been comfortably lodged for a period of seven days each. They breakfast there and partake of the remainder of their meals at the British Club for Belgian Soldiers, which is in close vicinity. The Home has every modern comfort and all that is ordinarily required to make their stay comfortable. But unlike the parent Club, up to the present it has been maintained by funds subscribed privately by English and Belgian residents. In securing this assistance the Committee were so active that they were soon able to report a balance of £4,000. His Majesty the King of the Belgians, following up his wishes in a practical way, sent a personal donation of £400.

The Committee in view of its excellent financial position, at once took steps to extend the scope of its activities, and readily agreed to take over further work. As the British Club was feeling the burden of financial responsibility imposed by the military work at Southampton, the Committee agreed to take over the Southampton work. In addition to which the Hon. Secretary, Consul General Van der Heyden, residing at Folkestone, knew the great need of a Home there, and formed a Committee in the interest of the men known as the "Cercle Militaire Albert." The societies both at Southampton and Folkestone are incorporated with "Les Vacances du Soldat Belge."

M. Washington Serruys and Jos. L. Dirick—two officers of the Committee—had in consequence a heavy task thrown on them, which has been accomplished with marked success.

Folkestone and Southampton being both of them ports at which Belgian soldiers arrive and depart, these institutions can well be regarded as essential Military organisations. The following extract from a report on the working of the "Cercle Militaire Albert" of Folkestone since the foundation to the end of August, 1917, will record some of its valuable activities, as given by the devoted Secretary, Monsieur Jules E. de Smet :—

"Our gratitude is therefore addressed to all those who have co-operated in the running and development of our organism, as well from the point of view of the activity shown as from the financial support received, our thanks go out particularly to the Comité des Dames, presided over by the devoted Madame Van de Vyvere, who

had undertaken the administration of the daily service of lunches served to thousands of our brave and valiant visitors. The marks of approbation and encouragement that we have received from our well beloved Sovereign, from the Civil, Military and Religious authorities, make an unforgettable page of honour for our Club and of which we can justly be proud.

"27,600 lunches, consisting of soup, coffee, bread and butter, have been served free.

"Our financial transactions in English and French money and *vice versa* show a total of 252,201 francs for 11,500 men changing their money: they have effected a minimum saving to our soldiers of 2 per cent., i.e., 5,040 francs, in getting away from the numerous little offices who watch for and exploit them.

"The lodging supplied amounted to 2,425. One hundred and twenty-five beds, under excellent conditions of health and cleanliness, are daily at the disposal of the soldiers at the rate of one shilling per night.

"Our fifteen correspondence desks fully and freely equipped, have given to the letter box at the Club the enormous figure of 66,200 letters, cards, packages, which stamped with the seal of the Club have made it known to the smallest villages of England, France and Belgium.

* * *

"In agreement with the Consul for France and the Military authorities, we have offered the most cordial hospitality to our friends and valiant French brothers in arms, of which 635 have been our guests.

"Children of Flanders and Wallonia find here that atmosphere of cordiality and goodfellowship of family and lost home, which gives them peace from their sufferings and horrors lived through, the necessary strength to meet still more strenuous hours, the unshakable confidence in the triumph of the sacred cause of Right, Justice and Liberty.

"Conscious of the immensity of their struggle, of the necessity of accomplishing their task, they give their life without regret for the emancipation of future generations."

The Southampton Institute holds a unique position: it not only looks after the arrival of the soldiers on leave, passing through that port, but bids a hearty farewell in providing comforts for the recruits who are travelling to France for a period of training, to form eventually part of the fighting forces.

The officers and servants of the railway companies throughout the United Kingdom are well known to our Belgian guests for their kindness and assistance to them when travelling, and in the case of Southampton they have been specially considerate in solving a difficult problem, namely, how to house the Belgian soldiers and recruits when interruption of traffic holds up their departure. Obviously, it would have been imprudent to allow these men to roam at will without means of obtaining food or lodging. The London and South Western Railway Company lent free of charge a large room, close to the landing stage, capable of housing 100 to 120 men, and added thereto free fuel and light. The Committee of the British Club for Belgian Soldiers with local assistance and also aided by the Local Government Board,

fitted up the building so as to enable the men to sleep there and hot meals to be served as required.

For the period between January 1st and August 31st, 1917, 7,488 Belgian soldiers and 2,537 Belgian recruits have been housed and fed at Southampton, at a total cost of £589. Mr. Ruffin, formerly of the Transport Department, London, undertook the supervision of the work, and having "done his bit" at the front, fully realises the needs of his travelling compatriots.

Without the assistance of local officers and gentlemen, on whom a large share of the undertaking depends, and who have devoted their time and energy to it, the scheme could not have been made a success.

The Military Control Officer, Captain H. D. Patterson, has given considerable help, inasmuch as it has been kindly made practicable to obtain supplies at British Army Contract Rates for the Military section of the work.

Mr. Tedder, the Aliens' Officer, realising the position of our alien soldier friends, has taken a personal interest in their welfare, as also Mr. Pettet, the popular Marine Superintendent, and Mr. Hodges, the Chief Stevedore.

The Belgian Refugees, as well as soldiers, mainly have cause to be thankful to these gentlemen who have carried out their duties in a most kindly manner. Many will always have good cause to remember Mr. A. E. Andrews, who has generously placed motor cars for the convenience of the wounded and Belgian officials visiting the port on duty.

Here we find at Southampton every effort made through local interest and the support of the Consul that the soldier should not want for anything; from this port he is sent on his way rejoicing and with a longing to return to these shores to give thanks for the hospitality afforded him on his departure.

THE KING ALBERT'S HOSPITAL COMMITTEE.

Mention has been made earlier of the King Albert's Hospitals Committee. It would not come within the scope of this book to deal fully with the work of this important body, which was constituted by the Belgian Government for the work of caring for Belgian wounded and convalescent soldiers in the United Kingdom, but a brief reference to it would not be out of place.

The President is His Excellency Baron C. Goffinet, and under his valuable direction much excellent work has been done, ten thousand Belgian soldiers having been admitted or treated by the various hospitals established by the Committee. (For accommodation of King Albert's Hospitals and Medical Staff see Appendix).



HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE BELGIANS IN THE TRENCHES. p. 36



ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY OF BELGIAN NEUTRALITY, SOUTHAMPTON.

The Governing body includes Monsieur le Chevalier Carton de Wiart, Hon. Secretary to H.M. The King of the Belgians, and other distinguished Belgian members; and among the English members may be mentioned Sir Arthur Downes and Mr. J. S. Oxley, who were nominated by the President of the Local Government Board in view of the active part which they have taken in War Refugee work from the outset. His Excellency Monsieur Paul May also took an energetic part in the work of the Committee, and acted as Honorary Secretary up to the time when he went as Minister to China; the post has since been filled by Monsieur R. de Gottal.

The first hospital opened by the Committee was that at Staffordshire House, Store Street, W.C., which was generously placed at their disposal and converted into a hospital, free of cost, by Mr. W. Bourne and Mr. H. Hollingsworth. Those gentlemen also contributed largely towards the current expenditure of the establishment, and their well-known business capacity has always been available in carrying on the work of the Committee.

In view of the increase in the number of wounded and convalescent soldiers, further accommodation was required, and several Institutions were placed at the service of the Committee by the Shoreditch Board of Guardians and other public-spirited bodies at the cost partly of the Local Government Board and partly of the Committee themselves.

OEUVRE DE CONGÉ DU SOLDAT DE L'INDEPENDENCE BELGE.

It is a most pleasing feature of the Belgian Military War Work that all the organisations, both Belgian and British, work in close friendly co-operation with each other and yet are controlled independently, gaining consequently the utmost result: overlapping is eradicated, and the benefits derived in the soldiers' interest are divided equally.

Monsieur A. Lemonnier, one of the leading Belgian Editors, well known for his generosity, gave a ready ear to the cries of his soldier compatriots, who were longing to learn through the medium of his paper something about their country and townsfolk. The terrible experience he himself had to undergo appealed to his large heart to help those who were not in a position to help themselves, such as are the soldiers separated from their families and without relations to invite them to this country; whose only outlook is that of going from the trenches to rest camps and *vice versa* without the prospect of a holiday.

The assistance of Lieut. Armand Van Hoorde, the soldiers' friend, was secured to reach these soldiers, and from June, 1915, to June, 1917, 2,362 men have been able to enjoy their much deserved rest, at a total cost of £3,000. The Committee have specialised in assisting destitute soldiers. Each man is comfortably housed and given 5s. for pocket money. Entertainments, free of charge, have been provided, and in this way the would-be heavy heart has returned to the front with most pleasing recollections of a restful time and pleasant holiday.

GLASGOW.

The soldier's movements are assisted from the time he leaves Calais or Boulogne, through the great Metropolis, to the Provinces, and for those whose friends are residing in North Britain a warm welcome is waiting.

The people of Scotland, who responded most heartily to the cause of our Belgian friends have extended their hospitality to the military relatives.

Mr. Alexander Walker, the Hon. Secretary to the Glasgow Corporation Committee and Official Registrar for Scotland for Belgian Refugees, notwithstanding his many duties has devoted much of his time to soldiers on leave. His representatives are in attendance at Central and St. Enoch Stations, where they meet the London trains on arrival and take the soldiers under their care, guiding them to the care of friends or to accommodation provided by the Glasgow Committee.

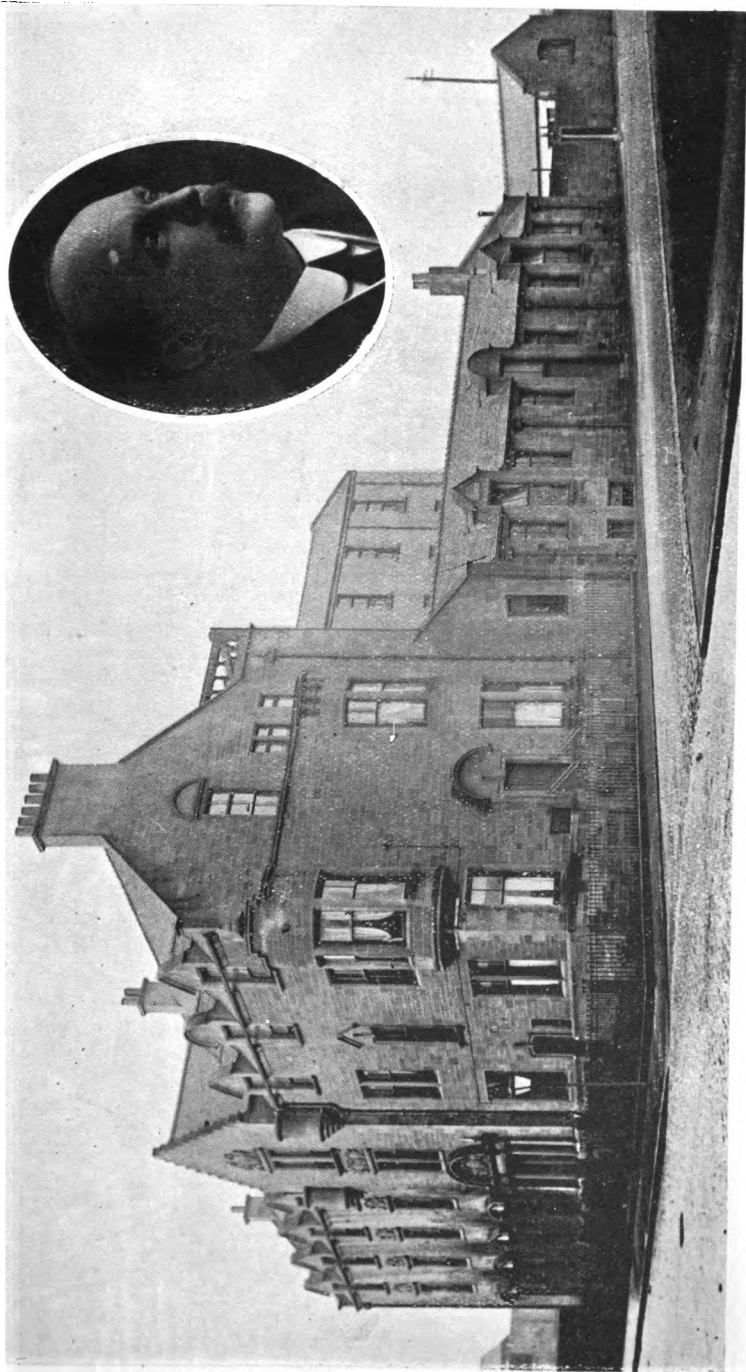
In this way the Glasgow Committee for over two years provided hospitality for about 30 men a week who had no relatives in this country. They, with other Committees, have considerably assisted to relieve the trying experiences of the men in the trenches whose only future outlook was the drudgery and monotony of the trench and rest camp life.

As the war drags on our Scottish friends never relax their interest, having received over 3,000 soldiers who have been made happy, and given facilities to view the typical Scotch scenery, such as Loch Lomond, and to enjoy the various entertainments which the City of Glasgow has provided.

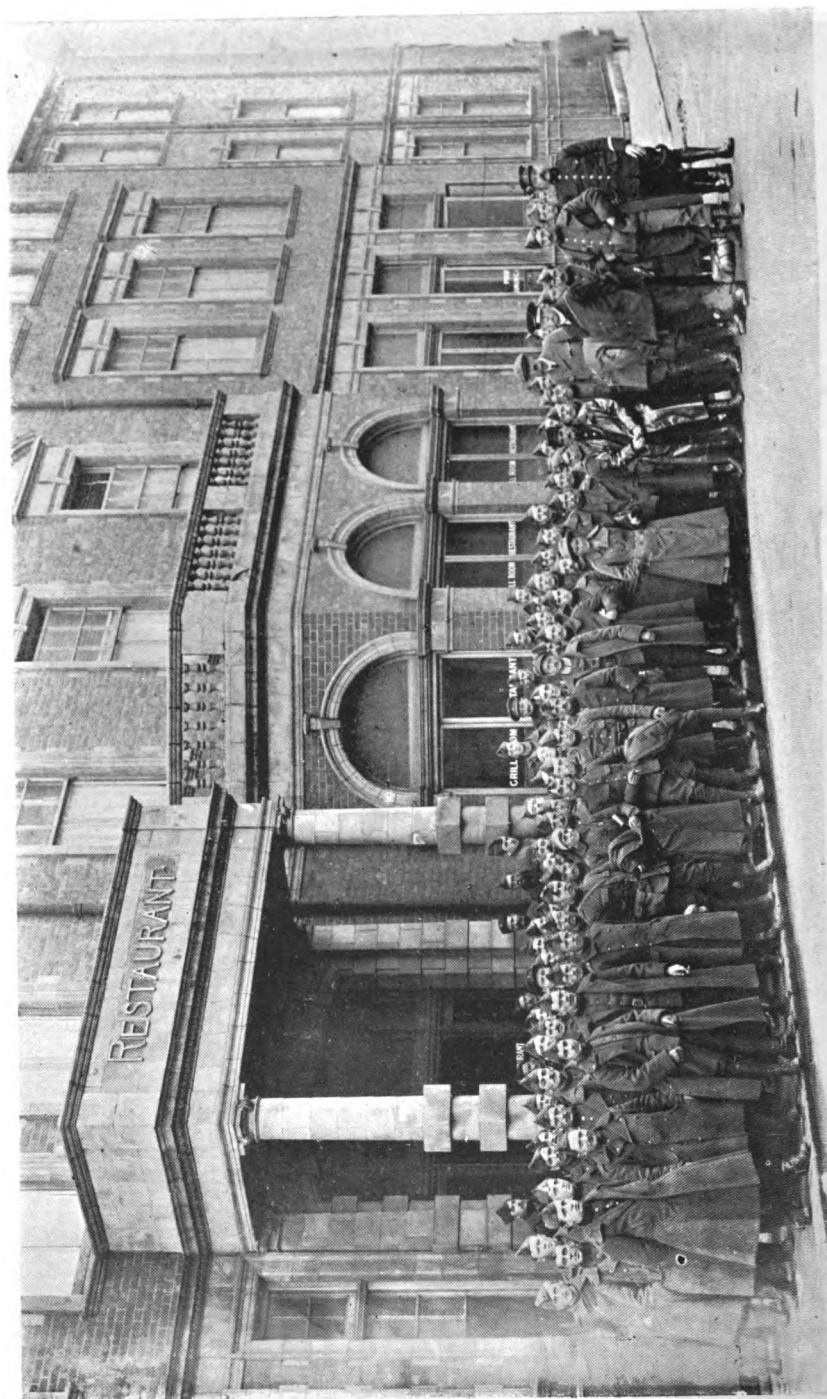
That the stay in Scotland is so popular is proved by the volume of correspondence arriving weekly from the Front. Such a welcome as only Scotland can give will never be forgotten by the Belgian soldiers.

TORQUAY CONVALESCENT HOME.

In the far West of England will be found the wounded soldier on convalescent leave, thanks to the generosity and kindness of our Torquay friends, centrally controlled by a



BELGIAN SOLDIERS' HOSTEL, GLASGOW. INSET—MR. A. WALKER, HON. SECRETARY, BELGIAN REFUGEE COMMITTEE, GLASGOW. p. 38



"GRILL" REPRISMENT ROOM, FOLKESTONE.

London Committee, under the able management of Madame Carton de Wiart, and her immediate helper Monsieur Van der Velde. Under their care it is possible for the soldier to enjoy the mild atmosphere of the West, enabling him to return to the Front and "carry on."

The Convalescent Home at Torquay is most capably managed by Madame de Fabribeckers de Cortils et Grace. Father de Louche, Chaplain to the Belgian Forces, also takes a lively interest in the care of these men, thus connecting up his devoted interest in wounded soldiers from the time they reach these shores.

COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF RÉFORMÉ SOLDIERS.

It will be observed in tracing the origin and growth of the various Societies interested in Belgian soldiers that similar lines have been followed as in the case of the British. This plan was not designedly arranged, but proves to justify the necessity for the comfort of the men to be studied on an unofficial basis, so leaving the hands of the official Military Organisation free to carry out their own heavy responsibilities. Thus the Committee for Protection of Réformé Soldiers is found (see Appendix) grappling most successfully with individual questions when it would be difficult to obtain assistance from larger bodies. Miss Lea Rothchild, the most capable Hon. Secretary, dealing with the men in this special way, has been the means of bringing comfort to those in distress.

This Committee, like many others, has not appealed for funds, feeling that it was opposed to a Nation's dignity to ask for help for their men who are being sacrificed in defence of their country. The funds being small, had to be administered in an economical way to the most deserving.

They were the movers in introducing a special badge for the wounded, as now worn by the men, which was especially useful for those whose wounds were not apparent: this saved the wounded from being misjudged by the Public.

Gifts of clothing were made and small loans of money to tide over distress temporarily.

In this way 2,000 men have been benefited, for many of whom suitable employment was found; and so the needed work proceeded until the Commission of Revision successfully handled this question in the manner referred to below, under the heading of "Man-Power," etc.

On May 16th, 1916, the Committee had the misfortune to lose their most able President, M. Emile Royer, who had done so much in the interest of these poor men with his Govern-

ment. His good works follow him : before his death his wish was that Senator Jules Franc should replace him, whose influence and advice has already proved invaluable in connection with the problem of re-education for the wounded. Surely the experience of such a Committee will be of great service in settling the many difficulties yet to be faced.

(6) RETURN TO THE FRONT.

The return of the soldier from his residence may be regarded as a personal responsibility. It is extremely interesting to learn that practical gratitude is expressed by the soldiers, and the number of absentees is negligible : the officers have no fear of releasing their men for a holiday in England.

Energies, however, are not relaxed until the soldier is piloted to the train en route for the Continent. Nightly will be found men returning from the Provinces, anxious to obtain a night's lodging ; the organisation would not be complete if this part of the undertaking were neglected. The following account, however, will throw some light on the problem and the provision made to meet it :—

The question may sometimes have been raised in the minds of the public whose pleasure it has been to witness the arrival of troops from the front on leave, as to how the men are accommodated on their return journey. They arrive in a body and their despatch to their homes is, shall we say, practically the work of a machine ; but what about those returning who come into the London stations at all hours of the day and night in an unknown number, and should traffic be suspended for even one day, what can be the possible arrangements for meeting the demand ? As our British soldiers require assistance, so much more is it necessary in the case of our Belgian friends. Thanks to the admirable arrangements made the difficulty is somewhat overcome. To do honour to those who incessantly labour in this particular duty it is necessary to outline the work in detail.

Since it is at 5.45 a.m. from Victoria that the majority of the soldiers now leave, they are nearly all unable to reach the station at so early an hour, when trains and omnibuses are not running, and, in consequence, they have to come to the station overnight, where they are met by the station workers. By means of hourly reports and telephone, information is obtained where beds are to be had at the various Hostels for soldiers.

The responsibility is voluntarily undertaken by Messrs. Bennet, Evan McDonald and Bulbeck, who since the commencement of the war have been at their post busy finding accommodation for the returning Belgian soldier, working

indefatigably from 11 p.m. till the early hours of morning. Their difficulty at times is a real one, as the institutions are often full to overcrowding.

The most important Hostel is the Belgian Soldiers Hostel, 44, Grosvenor Place, where, thanks to the most generous gift of Mrs. Tremenheere, and assisted by Miss Bertie, they have a splendid house with 80 beds, a writing, dining and recreation room at their disposal, where the soldiers are invited as honoured guests, and in this way 22,366 have been helped since the 3rd November, 1916.

The men are given supper, and before their departure, breakfast. Three well appointed bathrooms provide hot or cold baths at any hour of the day or night.

When this Hostel is full the men are taken to other available accommodation. The nearest to hand is the Salvation Army Hostel, 48, Grosvenor Gardens, two minutes from Victoria Station. The unfailing kindness of the Sergeant-in-Charge there, Mr. Brown, towards the Belgians, makes it a haven of refuge.

The Buckingham Palace Hotel, which has now been taken over by the Church Army, is now a Hostel for soldiers, and Belgians are received there, thanks to the kindness of Captain Hoare and his willing workers.

His Majesty the King most graciously had half the Royal Riding School in the grounds of Buckingham Palace converted so as to accommodate 96 beds. Extremely cheerful and comfortable this Hostel is. All soldiers, British and Belgian alike, at this Hostel become, so far as accommodation permits, the guests of His Majesty.

When the Belgian soldier is aware of this, he expresses a keen desire to be invited there. It brings home to him the united interest taken in his welfare by the Sovereign of his own country and of the country where it has been his pleasure to spend his leave. Forty or fifty men a night are often successful in obtaining this accommodation. Mr. Stroud, of the Church Army, who is in charge, and looks after all the men's wants diligently, has frequently remarked how well behaved are the Belgians and how prompt to get up when called, even at the early hour of 4.30 a.m.

One of the cosiest Hostels in the vicinity of Victoria is the Catholic Women's League Hut; thousands of Belgians have slept there.

Seventy Belgian soldiers are often taken to the Hostel in Artillery Row, Westminster. They have there comfortable mattresses and blankets on the floor of two big rooms well warmed, this also free of charge, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Richardson.

In the late autumn of 1916 Miss Feilding, who was often to be seen at the Catholic Women's League Hut, made the

following suggestion to Mr. Bennet :—

"My mother, my sister and I," she said, "are much distressed to think that so many Belgian soldiers should have to pass these cold wet nights awaiting their train for return to the Front in Victoria Station for want of available beds. We have, therefore, furnished a room on the ground floor of our house, 48, Grosvenor Gardens, with accommodation for four or five men. As you are at the station early and late every night will you do me the kindness to bring in any men whom you cannot otherwise lodge? Here is the latch key. We will call them and give them their breakfasts at the Y.M.C.A. opposite, as we cannot ourselves cook for them at so early an hour."

Greatly delighted, but somewhat perturbed, Mr. Bennet replied :—"But, Miss Feilding, it is an exceedingly serious risk you may be incurring in receiving into your house perfect strangers like this. Have you realised that I might be so unfortunate as to introduce among the 'lambs' a black sheep into your open house with its contents within reach of one who may be without any sense of honour? You know how highly I think of these brave Belgians, how I admire and respect them, but I am not so foolish as to blind myself to the fact that there may be an exception, even among such men, and I therefore hesitate to accept your offer. Besides this, is not your mother, Lady Louisa, nervous?"

"We have thought of all this and have decided on running the risks you speak of," was the reply, and so, as Mr. Bennet says, "it came about that I held the key of 48, Grosvenor Gardens, for the winter of 1916-1917, and for about five months of that exceptionally cold winter I took into the little dormitory the stray Belgians for whom I could find no other accommodation. This was generally between midnight and 1 a.m. Every morning at 4.30 one of the ladies roused the guests by knocking at the door and by calling out: 'Quatre heures et demi, Messieurs'—until a 'Merci, Madame,' in a sleepy voice from within proved that someone had awakened."

"When the men were dressed they passed through the Hall, where they were met by the lady on duty who, giving them each a breakfast ticket, wished them 'Bonne chance' or 'Bon voyage,' and on her part felt, as they hurried out into the dark street, how well rewarded she was for the early rising by the gratitude almost invariably expressed by the visitors. It is with peculiar pleasure and intense pride that I place on record that over 530 Belgian soldiers accepted Lady Louisa Feilding's hospitality, and that their conduct was beyond reproach, and also that they not only acknowledged their indebtedness with charming cordiality as they



BELGIAN SOLDIERS' HOSTEL, 44, GROSVENOR PLACE, LONDON. p. 42



BAND OF THE 1ST REGIMENT OF THE BELGIAN CARABINNERS.

"left, but very often the most courteous letters of thanks afterwards. When warmer weather set in and I returned the latch-key, it was triumphantly pointed out to me by one of the ladies of 48, Grosvenor Gardens, that the trust and confidence of the hostesses of my good Belgian friends had been absolutely justified."

Mr. Macdonald also gave over his largest bedroom to the Belgians, put in three beds, and during the terrible cold of the Winter months, frequently took in eight or nine at night.

Traffic interruptions have, fortunately, not been frequent, but when they do occur thousands of soldiers have to be cared for. Extra emergency accommodation has to be resorted to.

In these instances very valuable help has been afforded by Mr. Powell, the Officer in Charge of the Government Earls Court War Refugees Camp, where the men have spent an enjoyable time, regretting very much the resumption of traffic. In addition, Mr. Powell offers hospitality to soldiers whose dependents are in the Camp and no pains are spared to make their stay enjoyable.

This leave in England must on the whole do incalculable good to the spirit and morale of the Belgian soldiers.

It is a great pleasure to read the simple and touching letters that these brave and courageous simple-hearted men write, in sincere gratitude for all that has been sought to do to aid them whilst here on leave in England.

The following translation of a letter, typical of many, speaks for itself. It was from a little lad who was not 17 when war broke out. He had been through the war from the beginning and until the close of 1916 he had never been absent on leave. He was invited by that admirable fund "*Le Congé du Soldat*" initiated and carried out by the Belgian paper *L'Indépendance Belge* to invite men on leave who are without family or friends:—

"DEAR SIR,—I am pleased to be able to answer your letter of the 1st inst. which touched me deeply, and I do not know in what way to thank you for the comforting words and encouragement you shower on me. Yes, indeed, I am pleased to see that I am not all alone, despite the barrier which cuts me off from my family. Yes, Sir, believe me, your words have given me courage and energy needful to support the sufferings of to-day, and, as you say, I have the hope that before long I shall have the joy of leaving the banks of the Yser behind me, and the opportunity of avenging the sufferings the Barbarians have inflicted on my country. Perhaps it may last a long while yet, but it little matters provided we are victorious, and then, Sir, write to me often, the hour of deliverance will appear to hand. When I have the blues, I shall again have the joy of reading what you say and drawing needful courage from your letters.

"Awaiting your reply, I conclude, and beg of you to accept the most sincere thanks of your humble and devoted servant."

* * *

It must be a great satisfaction to those interested in our

Belgian guests to learn that as the British Government offered the refugees the hospitality of the Nation, they were pleased to extend to the fighting forces of the Belgian Army a warm welcome to come to this country to see their friends and relations.

It is very worthy of note that the soldier has been assisted by both British and Belgian alike, and the machinery herein outlined has proved an excellent undertaking. That the soldier has proved himself worthy, upholding the traditions of his country, is shown in the pages of this book, and considering the environment in which he may have been living for many years, as revealed by this war, it is all the more reason why we should do honour to the men of Belgium, animated with the same spirit, "Fighting for Right, Might, King and Country."

In the forty-sixth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1916-17, referring to the Belgian soldiers it is stated:—

"The behaviour of the men in this country has been "excellent." Nothing further needs, therefore, to be added to emphasise this official statement.

(7) MAN POWER.

EMPLOYMENT AND MILITARY SERVICE LAWS.

Reference was made in the earlier part of this work to wounded or reformé soldiers, and although this book refers in the main to serving soldiers on leave, a fitting reference might here be made to other military interests that form part of the work of the Transport Department.

A certain important Projectile Factory was instituted in England, under the immediate direction of the Ministry of Munitions, to be manned entirely with Belgian labour. Not unlike our own factories for war purposes, it was not intended that it should form a "dug-out" for Belgian men to evade their military duty, as all men were required for the Army who were within the age and capable of bearing arms.

It has sometimes been overheard in the streets that Belgians were using this country as a hiding place, and their men were seeking cover at the expense of their Allies, a suggestion which should have been contradicted through the English Press from time to time.

If it were not for the reserved character of the Belgian people, no doubt this would have been done. On one occasion when 300 brave Belgians had arrived at Liverpool Street Station, after making their way out of the territory occupied by the enemy by hairbreadth escapes, on the way to join the

fighting forces, a comment was made in the Press asking why these men were making a hiding place of England, and the rumour once started, carried itself away with increased intensity at the expense of a country still ever willing to give of its utmost man power, and of men themselves equally anxious to obtain redress, not only for a national grievance, but for the loss of relatives, friends and property.

If the Belgians had to grapple with their own man power problem in their own country, it would have been practically simple, but to introduce machinery into a country where their laws could not be applied, and other laws operative in a foreign land had to be adopted, presented undoubtedly a complex problem.

In spite of the difficulties, the question has been tackled in a thoroughly capable and efficient manner; every ounce of labour that can be utilised has been employed in national interest.

When the Military Department took over the care of their own wounded soldiers, those who were fit for active service were returned to duty, those not fit for service but fit for civil employment remained in this country on condition that they were employed on munition work, while those who could not be employed were, with few exceptions, sent to France to special schools for re-education, classified according to the degree of their disability.

The few exceptions were the men who had lost both legs, paralysed and the like, who have been kept in England temporarily by special permission at the Education School under the care of Miss Heyneman at California House, at which institution excellent results have been obtained.

Another Institution which employed many men before other schools were fit to receive them, and where admirable results were also obtained in the production of woollen work, was at Crosby Hall, Chelsea, under the superintendence of the Hon. Lady Lyttelton and Mrs. Erskine Childers.

Lady St. Helier, who started a Home at Ewell, has added to the usefulness of re-education by teaching disabled men basket making. The output is considerable, and the efficiency maintained speaks well for the men. This work is now carried on at Surbiton under the direction of Madame Carton de Wiart.

Blinded soldiers were not neglected. At St. Dunstan's Sir Arthur Pearson opened his doors to these men and they, like their British comrades, have been well looked after, receiving training to fit them for a future career.

Taking your thoughts back to the Projectile Factory, a comparatively small proportion of skilled men were taken from the trenches to work and adapt the unskilled men available for munition work. These were received and passed

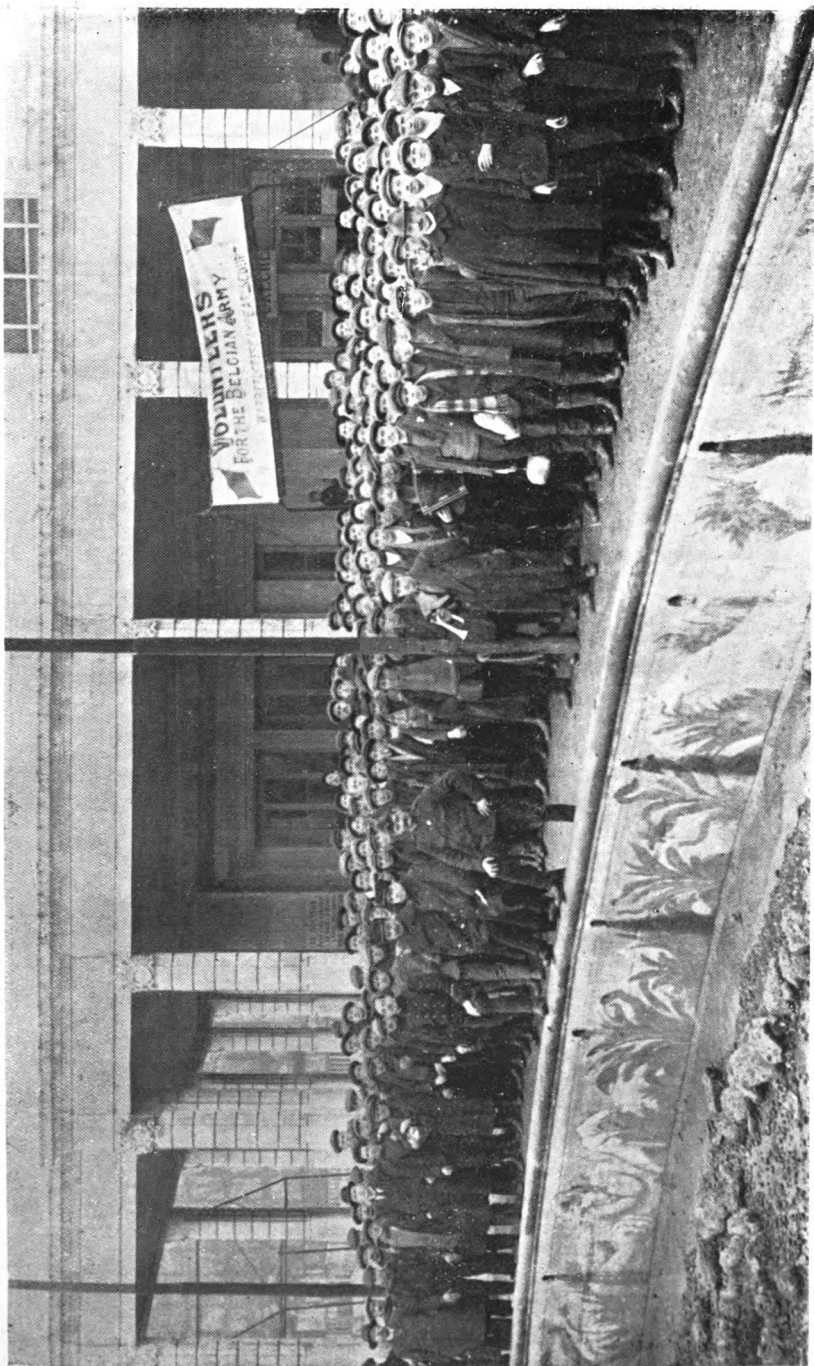
to their destination by the Transport Department. The result of this undertaking is that by the employment of skilled labour to the extent of one third of the personnel the two thirds who were unskilled wounded men were able to be trained in making shells, the output of which has reached a result far exceeding expectations.

Having thus dealt with the wounded soldier we come to the question : what about the civil population of military age who had found their way to these shores and had obtained hospitality ? Were these to escape, more especially when the ranks of the little army had been so depleted ? Their case had certainly not escaped the notice of the Authorities, and when the necessary time had been taken to develop an organisation, these men were brought to the military training ground. In fairness to the young Belgians resident in England, it should be stated that several thousands had joined the forces before the Conscription Laws could be applied.

Mr. Powell, Officer-in-Charge of the Government War Refugees Camp, Earl's Court, for the Local Government Board, reports :—

It is difficult to select one feature of the work of this Camp before another for special comment, but one of the most noteworthy has been the great success which attended the voluntary recruiting movement amongst the men arriving in the camp at the end of 1914 and during 1915. The spirit of these men was such that not much in the way of propaganda work was required, and this was supplied by attractive posters in French and Flemish, after well-known English models, placed on the walls of the large entrance hall, and especially by the efforts of an Irish lady, Madame Rue, skilled in the French and Flemish tongues, and her sister, Miss R. Patton. The appeals, "Belgians, your King and Country need you" and "L'union fait la force" rarely fell on deaf ears, and in the first few weeks the small office in Finsbury Square, where the Belgian military work was then conducted, proved quite unable to deal with the large numbers of volunteers sent up.

As the result of our representations, a "Bureau Militaire Belge" was opened in the Camp under the direction, during most of 1915, of M. le Commandant Baron de Favereau. Here the volunteers were medically examined and enrolled. They were then supplied by the staff of the Camp with the gifts generously authorised by the Local Government Board for volunteers, including warm underclothing, boots, a little pocket money for their journey, and lastly, what was perhaps most highly valued, a small enamelled medallion with the Belgian and British Flags and the inscription "Earl's Court Volunteers." Those connected with the Camp and the residents in the neighbourhood are not likely to forget the enthusiastic scenes which attended the tri-weekly departure of parties of from



"RAW MATERIAL" AT EARL'S COURT CAMP, LONDON.



THE "FINISHED ARTICLE" AT EARL'S COURT CAMP, LONDON.

100 to 150 volunteers as they marched away from Earl's Court with banners waving, and singing, to the accompaniment of such musical instruments as were available, their national airs interspersed with "Tipperary" and sundry corresponding French songs with chorus, such as "Sous les ponts de Paris," then favourites with the troops. Accompanied by the two devoted ladies mentioned, and other helpers, they braved the perils of the moving staircase at Earl's Court Tube Station—then seen by most of them for the first time—were pushed en masse on to a tube train in the short space of time allowed for the purpose, re-formed at Waterloo and marched to the train, where they were provided with cigarettes, buns, etc. It is safe to say that few departures for the Front aroused more interest at the time amongst those who witnessed them.

In the Autumn of 1915, M. le Capitaine Commandant Braeckman was appointed to take charge of the Bureau Militaire in place of the Baron Favereau who went to France, and later, when this work diminished in consequence of men of military age being called upon to serve under the Belgian "arrêté-lois" on this subject, M. Braeckman became Commandant de la Place in London, and the Bureau in the Camp has since been maintained by Sergeant-Major Mouchette, under his general direction.

All our requirements for the transport of the volunteers from camp were most adequately and promptly met by Mr. Campbell, Transport Superintendent of the War Refugees Committee. About 5,000 volunteers were dealt with in the way outlined, prior to the introduction by the Belgians of compulsory service by groups. Since that event, every man arriving in the Camp must first produce his papers to the Bureau Militaire, and, apart from those who are required to serve, there are still volunteers found amongst those above or below the limit of age for compulsory service.

A large number of the volunteers return to the Camp from time to time on leave, and the soldiers, relatives and friends of the refugees in the Camp as well as others who have no friends in England are always made welcome. Occasionally parties of soldiers returning to France and unable to proceed from London owing to temporary suspension of the boat service, have been temporarily accommodated in the Camp.

It may not be generally known, but of the population in Belgium there are still many thousands who are anxious to serve their King and Country, and nobody but can feel proud of the recruits who have escaped from Belgium and found their way to join the military forces, and of the parents who have often sold up their belongings and raised sufficient funds to enable them to do so.

These men are received in England under arrangements made by Mr. Roundell of the Local Government Board, and on

arrival are looked after and refreshed through the kindness of Mrs. Henry at Gravesend.

To give an example: It is well within recent memory how the launch "Schelde," belonging to the German Governor of Antwerp, recently made its way from Antwerp to Holland, flying the German flag and saluted by the German Ports en route. This little vessel contained a number of these brave-hearted Belgians, whose anxiety it was to join the Belgian Forces.

Conscription Laws are part of the military system in Belgium, but to the uninitiated it would, perhaps, not be out of place to describe briefly the excellent rules applied.

The men are called up by Groups, according to age and whether married or single. A young unmarried man, say in the twenties, would be classified in Group I; unless he is totally medically unfit he must obey the call for this Group. It may be he would not be medically fit for the trenches, in this case he would be available for auxiliary service of Group I, and eventually find his employment on the lines of communication, transport behind the lines, or other non-effective service. The group system extends to men of 40 years of age. Married men (married previous to the war) are classified in Groups IV to VI, according to age (or in special circumstances in Group VII) and these are regarded as being available when occasion demands for duty on auxiliary work. It can be readily seen that by this method none of the men escape inclusion: the method is undoubtedly simple and efficient.

A soldier having been called for active service leaves his home with the knowledge that his wife and family, or other dependents, will not be left to starve. A separation allowance is granted by his Government; and in addition to this his wife is enabled to apply for assistance, if unable to work, to the local Refugees' Committee or the War Refugees' Committee at Aldwych, and so place herself in the same position as that of a British soldier's wife whose husband is called for military duty. The funds are provided by the British Government in all cases of need. Through the kindness of Messrs. H. A. Leggett and E. Tudor Owen, both Officers of the Local Government Board, the relatives know that they have always friends to apply to in time of need. Too much importance cannot be placed on the fact that our Belgian friends are not neglected in this respect, if only to counteract the poison of hate now circulated in Belgium by papers under enemy control.

Moreover—to return to the subject of soldiers on leave—when the near relations of a soldier wish to invite him to stay with them, but are not in a position to maintain him during his visit, they may ask the Local Refugees' Committee to endorse their application and pay or help with the expenses of his visit, and such requests will be sure to obtain a sympathetic hearing.



LT. GENERAL SIR ADOLPH ORTH, K.C.M.G.

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Le Foyer du Soldat Belge en Grande-Bretagne.

Par le
H. Campbell
Directeur du Département du Transport
du
War Refugees Committee.

Gracieusement traduit de l'Anglais par Mme. W. Serruys.

Décembre 1917.

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BELGIAN OFFICES,

32, GROSVENOR PLACE,

7th February, 1918.

Je tiens à recommander chaleureusement la lecture de ce livre aux Belges résidant en Angleterre. Ils y verront avec quel remarquable talent Mr. Campbell et ses collègues ont organisé le transport des soldats belges venant en congé au Royaume Uni. Grâce à cette parfaite organisation ces braves, séparés de leurs familles restées en Belgique dans l'immense majorité des cas, peuvent néanmoins jouir de leur congé. Leur reconnaissance et la nôtre va à l'homme de cœur, auteur de ce livre.

LALLA VANDERVELDE.

AVANT-PROPOS.

Le Soldat Belge est une figure connue dans nos rues et nos stations et le public certainement se demande souvent : Pourquoi est-il ici ? Comment arrive-t-il ici ? Qui s'en occupe pendant son séjour ?

L'objet de ce rapport est de donner quelques réponses à ces questions.

A la première nous répondrons :

Le soldat Belge vient ici parcequ'en règle générale sa famille est réfugiée en Angleterre, ou bien séparé des siens, il vient rejoindre ses amis, qui, eux aussi, ont taché de trouver dans ce pays hospitalier un foyer temporaire. Sinon, où irait-il ? Il est tout naturel qu'il éprouve le besoin de se joindre à ses compatriotes et le Gouvernement Anglais a si bien compris la chose qu'il lui accorde toutes les facilités possibles.

Les autres questions se rapportent à l'organisation du travail en faveur des soldats. Cette organisation est la même que pour les réfugiés. On lira avec intérêt quelques détails à ce sujet dans les pages qui suivent. J'insisterai tout particulièrement sur le dévouement et le soin qu'il a fallu apporter pour organiser et continuer cette œuvre si intéressante et à laquelle l'énergie Anglaise et Belge se sont consacrées tant dans le monde officiel que parmi les collaborateurs volontaires. Le soldat Belge est en de bonnes mains. Aussi ses remerciements ainsi que ceux de sa famille et de ses amis doivent aller à tous ceux qui se sont tant intéressés à lui, et parmi ceux-ci je citerai tous d'abord :

1°. Les Officiers Belges, et surtout M. le Major Maton, Attaché Militaire, 1914 ; le Lieut.-General Orth, K.C.M.G.,

Chef de la Mission Militaire à Londres; son successeur le Major-General Comte de Jonghe d'Ardoye, A.D.C. du Roi des Belges; ainsi que le Capitaine Guy Reyntiens, M.C., Attaché Militaire adjoint.

2°. Les Fonctionnaires du Local Government Board, et principalement Sir Horace Monro, K.C.B., qui a toujours pris un intérêt personnel à tout ce qui regarde le confort des réfugiés dans ce pays ainsi que Mr. F. J. Willis, C.B., qui a inauguré le service de transport des soldats et Mr. E. H. Rhodes.

3°. Le personnel du Transport Department ainsi que ceux du Service d'Embarquement, du Bureau des Congés et des autres institutions dont le concours précieux est signalé dans ce rapport, et le General Accident, Fire, Life Assurance Corporation, Ltd., qui permettent que leur bâtiment soit employé pour recevoir les soldats belges à leur arrivée à Londres.

H. CAMPBELL,

Transport Superintendent.

Decembre, 1917.

LE FOYER DU SOLDAT BELGE EN GRANDE-BRETAGNE.

INTRODUCTION ET APERCU GENERAL.

POUR saisir la portée du titre de cet ouvrage, il faut se reporter à la fin d'Août 1914, quand la Belgique fit un dernier appel aux Puissances pour protéger sa neutralité, et se rappeler comment l'héroïque petite Armée Belge forte de 135,000 hommes, admirablement commandée, tint tête à d'innombrables hordes ennemies, en défendant vaillamment Liège, Namur et Anvers, pour se joindre finalement aux armées alliées sur l'Yser.

Les manœuvres de retraite militaire ont certainement occupé une place marquante dans cette guerre, et en dépit de grandes pertes et de grandes privations, le fait est qu'aucune unité de l'armée belge n'a été capturée par l'ennemi.

On se rendra aisément compte des sentiments de cette petite armée accomplissant avec succès sa retraite, sachant que chaque kilomètre laissé aux mains ennemies serait cause de la souffrance des leurs et réalisant le sort terrible réservé aux malheureux compatriotes tant hommes que femmes et enfants, laissés en arrière.

Tous ces récits des premiers jours de guerre sont gravés dans la mémoire du peuple anglais qui fut heureux de pouvoir accueillir les réfugiés à leur arrivée à Londres. Les Belges aussi étaient reconnaissants de trouver des amis qui sympathisaient pleinement avec eux et compatissaient à leur sort lamentable. L'honorable vicomte Gladstone, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.B.E., dans son rapport sur le War Refugees Committee, Août 1916, a rendu compte d'une manière détaillée, du travail qui fut accompli alors.

Le Département des Transports de ce Comité s'occupait des Réfugiés arrivant de Belgique, ainsi que des soldats blessés ou d'autres personnes passant par l'Angleterre. Ce même département, comme nous le verrons dans la suite, s'occupa du transport des soldats belges venant en congé en Angleterre, chez leurs parents ou leurs amis. Pour mieux réaliser l'importance de ce travail, rendons-nous un matin vers une heure, à Holborn Station au milieu d'une grande affluence de

monde venant de tous côtés. Là se trouvaient 200 religieuses ayant pour garde de corps deux moines à mine grave et triste. Ces pauvres êtres avaient été arrachés de leurs couvents, et avec eux se trouvaient trois vieilles dames infirmes qu'on avait transportées tant bien que mal de leur asile à la frontière. Une petite fille de trois ans les accompagnait et paraissait être leur mascotte. Une balle avait traversé de part en part ses deux jambes, mais en dépit de ses souffrances, elle avait une certaine gaieté et semblait heureuse au milieu de son entourage. Tout le monde la caressait et chacun s'empressait auprès d'elle. Je pourrais donner en détail les arrangements pris concernant ces religieuses, mais l'espace me fait défaut.

Nous voici devant un nouveau problème : 80 soldats belges blessés, quelques uns incapables de marcher et demandant un soin immédiat avaient été transportés d'urgence dans divers hopitaux qui heureusement, n'étaient pas encore aussi encombrés qu'actuellement, et où ils purent être accueillis. Quelques incidents pourraient encore être relatés, mais bornons-nous à citer le cas de ce vieillard à barbe blanche portant une longue tunique et chargé de quelques nippes emballées dans une étoffe qui avait été blanche. Aussitôt débarqué, il trouve un coin tranquille et s'installe là résolument sur son paquet. Il fallut toute la peine du monde pour le convaincre qu'il ne pouvait trouver une logement pour 18 pences par semaine, et qu'il fallait l'envoyer dans une institution où il ne payerait rien.

Il semble que tous ces événements si pitoyables seraient intéressants à mettre en scène. Les trains se suivaient l'un l'autre amenant femmes et enfants dans un état quelquefois hystérique, et pleurant la perte d'un être cher, des petits enfants sans toit et sans parents, quelques uns orphelins pour toujours, d'autres seulement pour la durée de la guerre, des soldats blessés, des populations entières de villes détruites ; tout cela faisait douter de la civilisation !

Mais depuis lors, n'est-il pas vrai, chaque maison, chaque famille dans le Royaume-Uni, comme dans les pays alliés, a été frappée par cette terrible guerre. Le souvenir de nos pauvres jeunes gens mutilés ne restera-t-il pas gravé dans la mémoire de notre génération ?

En 1914 un arrangement conclu avec le Gouvernement Britannique permit aux soldats blessés de se faire soigner dans les hopitaux anglais. Et après quelques mois de soins dévoués et intelligents et grâce au concours du "Wounded Allies Committee" et de Lady Glover les soldats aptes au travail furent placés et purent subvenir à leur entretien ; les autres furent envoyés dans des asiles. Mais plus tard, cette mission fut reprise par le King Albert Hospital Committee qui devint responsable des soins à donner aux soldats blessés ou réformés.

Les détails sur chaque soldat belge transporté en Angleterre furent donnés aux Autorités militaires, ce qui permit de

surveiller l'arrivée et aussi le départ des hommes ; ceci toutefois occasionna beaucoup de travail supplémentaire. C'est vers cette époque, après les grands combats sur l'Yser, que l'armée belge trouva un peu de tranquillité et le roi des Belges toujours préoccupé du bien être de ses sujets décida que des congés seraient accordés aux soldats afin de leur permettre de retrouver les leurs en Angleterre.

A la fin de 1914, quelques soldats arrivèrent à Folkestone. Etant peu nombreux, on les traita de la même manière que les réfugiés. Le représentant du "Local Government Board," Mr. Leonard Franklin, assura leur subsistance et les aida à arriver à destination. Mais en 1915 leur nombre s'augmenta, et Mr. Franklin fut obligé de prendre d'autres mesures. Voici comment il exposa la situation : Folkestone étant une zone militaire prohibée, le nombre des réfugiés ne pouvait s'accroître, et un arrangement fut conclu, grâce à l'amabilité du Comité de Glasgow qui offrit l'hospitalité aux femmes et aux enfants des permissionnaires qui furent autorisés à rejoindre leurs familles. Certains d'entre eux toutefois n'avaient ni parents ni amis, les leurs étant restés au pays. Cette situation émut le peuple anglais car il était indispensable que les soldats ne se rendissent point chez des personnes de nationalité incertaine, et dont l'honorabilité ne pouvait être assurée, les renseignements qu'ils auraient pu apporter du front risquant ainsi d'être donnés à l'ennemi.

Ce fut alors que l'Administration du Transport du London War Refugees Committee prit la chose en mains, et inaugura un système qui est encore en vigueur maintenant, permettant aux soldats sans familles d'être reçus dans des clubs et institutions dans n'importe quelle partie du Royaume-Uni. Le Comité de Folkestone fut ainsi libéré de toute responsabilité, et n'eut plus qu'à se charger du transport des hommes vers Londres, et à procurer le logement et la nourriture à ceux qui étaient empêchés de poursuivre leur route directement. Leur arrivée à Londres donna certes beaucoup de souci au Comité, car plusieurs d'entre eux y venaient surtout dans le but d'obtenir des renseignements sur l'un ou l'autre membre de leur famille, ce qui ne pouvait toujours leur être procuré, et bien souvent ils étaient obligés de rejoindre leur poste sans avoir pu recueillir aucune nouvelle. L'enregistrement des réfugiés commença seulement après la chute d'Anvers, et des bureaux furent installés dans le "Skating Rink." Chaque soldat à la recherche des siens pouvait s'y rendre et obtenait quelquefois une réponse immédiate aux renseignements qu'il demandait, tandis que d'autres erraient comme des âmes en peine dans la grande cité Londonienne, et on en amenait parfois dénués de toutes ressources et sans nourriture au Département des Transports.

Quand ces scènes pathétiques furent connues, quelques charitables personnalités anglaises, cherchèrent à remédier à cet état de choses en créant un club sur le modèle de l'Union Jack Club. La Marquise de Salisbury mit immédiatement une maison, 20 Manchester Square, à la disposition des hommes. Cette institution fut appelée "Le British Club for Belgian Soldiers" dont les locaux sont maintenant transférés : 12 Con-aught Place. Les quelques personnes qui furent en contact direct avec ces premiers malheureux savent combien grands étaient leur chagrin et leur peine. Ces braves soldats fatigués, épuisés, ne cherchaient qu'à avoir des nouvelles des leurs. La plupart de ces hommes devaient être nourris, logés et munis d'un peu d'argent de poche. Mais les responsabilités devinrent de jour en jour plus grandes et il fut jugé nécessaire de prendre avis des Autorités militaires belges.

Plusieurs questions restaient à résoudre ; questions d'ordre militaire, ou relatives au transport ; toutes deux de grande importance. Les restrictions concernant les étrangers (comprenant ceux de nationalité amie) avaient été introduites et certaines zones venaient d'être prohibées. Il fallait aussi avoir la certitude que les soldats arrivant à destination seraient logés et puissent ensuite rejoindre leur poste à la date indiquée. Il est évident qu'un organisme devait être créé pour s'occuper de ces questions que nous examinerons sous les entêtes suivantes :—

- 1° Le Transport.
- 2° Les exigences militaires et policières envers les étrangers.
- 3° Le bureau militaire des congés.
- 4° L'embarquement à Folkestone ; Le voyage à Londres ; Les Gendarmes.
- 5° L'hospitalité.
- 6° Retour au front.
- 7° Lois sur le recrutement, le travail et le service militaire.

TRANSPORT.

Vers la fin de 1915, les difficultés de transport par mer étaient si grandes qu'il sembla douteux que les soldats belges puissent encore venir en congé en Angleterre. Jusqu'ici ils avaient pu jouir des mêmes facilités que leurs camarades anglais. Mais l'avenir paraissait si sombre qu'on se crut, un moment obligé de supprimer les congés vers ce pays, ce qui aurait produit un effet désastreux. Comme je me rendais un jour à une station de chemin de fer je rencontraï, par hasard, un officier

de l'armée belge, M. le Lieutenant Armand Van Hoorde, qui venait en congé de convalescence. Il avait, depuis le début de la guerre, manifesté un grand intérêt pour ses soldats. Questionné au sujet des congés, il n'eut pas de peine à me faire comprendre que la suppression des congés vers l'Angleterre serait très néliste au moral des troupes qui jusqu'ici avaient enduré toutes les souffrances et les privations avec tant de courage. Ceci était compréhensible pour toute personne ayant assisté à l'arrivée des réfugiés dont le premier souci était toujours d'avoir des nouvelles des soldats du front.

Afin d'empêcher que la chose ne se produise, une entrevue fût demandée à Sir Francis Dent, Directeur de la Compagnie "South Eastern & Chatham Railway," qui était plein de sympathie pour les Belges; il se rendit compte qu'il fallait trouver le moyen d'arriver à une solution pratique. Sir Francis Dent, d'accord avec M. Hayne, un collaborateur dévoué, decida que deux bateaux employés pour le transport des bagages des passagers seraient mis à la disposition des soldats belges, et avec l'assentiment de l'Amirauté, leur donna Folkestone comme port d'attache. Quelques arrangements s'imposaient et il fut aussitôt décidé que ce travail serait entrepris d'urgence et trois cents soldats belges purent peu de temps après traverser journellement la Manche. Il est inutile d'ajouter que cette nouvelle fut reçue avec reconnaissance. La question était alors de savoir qui supporterait les frais de transport qui devaient s'élever à £2-8-0 par homme et par jour. Il était difficile d'évaluer quelles seraient les dépenses totales vu l'incertitude du moment du retour.

Une délégation formée de deux officiers, MM. le Major Cartuyvels de Collaert et le Lieutenant Van Hoorde, représentant l'Autorité militaire belge et l'Administrateur des Transports représentant les Belges résidant en Angleterre fut envoyée auprès du Local Government Board. Ce fut un moment mémorable pour ceux qui assistèrent à cette réunion.

Mr. Willis, Secrétaire-Adjoint du Local Government Board et Mr. Rhodes de ce même département reçurent la délégation.

Le War Office était représenté par le Lieutenant-Colonel (aujourd'hui Général) H. O. Mance, D.S.C. et Mr. R. L. Coward.

L'Administrateur du transport exposa la situation pour les Belges. La tâche ne fut pas difficile, Mr. Willis toujours prêt à aider les Belges proposa de commun accord avec le Colonel Mance, que le transport se ferait à moitié prix. Cependant c'était encore une trop forte dépense pour les pauvres soldats, et dans une seconde entrevue, il fut décidé, après mûre considération, que le transport se ferait gratuitement, donnant ainsi aux Belges les mêmes facilités

qu'aux Anglais. Les frais devaient être supportés par le Local Government Board.

Mr. Cartuyvels et Mr. Van Hoorde se faisant les porte-voix des soldats Belges exprimèrent à Mr. Willis leur reconnaissance pour cette mesure qui leur assurait définitivement leur congé.

Le nombre exact des permissionnaires jusqu'à la fin d'Octobre 1917 figure à l'annexe. De Janvier à Juin 1915 le nombre fut moins grand que de Juillet à Janvier 1916. Actuellement 300 soldats peuvent être transportés journellement. Les infirmières de la Croix Rouge jouissent des mêmes avantages que les soldats.

POLICE.

Chaque soldat venant en congé devait être muni d'un passeport et ceci fut une des premières difficultés à surmonter. Le soldat ne pouvait être traité autrement que le voyageur ordinaire, et il était nécessaire de s'assurer de son identité et qu'il réunissait les conditions requises pour être admis en Grande-Bretagne même si son séjour ne devait y être que de courte durée.

Les hommes arrivèrent au début sans passe-ports et ils s'exposèrent ainsi au danger d'être détenus.

Quand l'armée Belge prit position sur l'Yser, le désir du roi Albert fut de libérer pour quelques jours autant de soldats que les exigences militaires le permettaient. Aussi les premiers congés accordés furent ils de courte durée. Les commandants ignoraient quelquefois la distance que leurs hommes avaient à parcourir avant d'arriver à destination. Aussi il advenait qu'un soldat était à peine arrivé qu'il devait reprendre le chemin du retour. Il était évident qu'il fallait trouver un moyen pour simplifier les formalités en tenant compte des règlements anglais et français. On consulta à ce sujet le Home Office.

Le Major Sealy Clarke du War Office et Mr. Moylan du Home Office prirent la chose à cœur et après avoir examiné la question élaborèrent un document appelé : "Titre de Congé" qui satisfaisait à tous les règlements et dont on trouvera un modèle à l'annexe. Avec ce titre de congé le soldat peut voyager maintenant sans difficulté en se bornant à se présenter au bureau de Police du lieu de sa destination à l'arrivée et au départ. Ce titre hautement apprécié par le soldat belge est écrit en trois langues, pour les wallons, les flamands ainsi que pour la police anglaise. Il porte l'empreinte digitale et la signature du permissionnaire et établit son identité. Au début, on eut certainement de la peine à empêcher quelques désertions. Se croyant à l'abri des recherches et éloignés de

leurs chefs, en pays étranger, certains hommes crurent la chose aisée.

Pour remédier à ce danger, une autre pièce annexe fut préparée. Ce document dispensait de l'envoi des télégrammes que la police devait envoyer lorsqu'un soldat se rendait dans une zone prohibée, il indiquait la durée de son congé et permettait à la police de le retracer immédiatement. Ce moyen simple et pratique a contribué à enrayer complètement le danger de désertion. Pour empêcher toute fraude ces titres de congé furent imprimés et enregistrés en Angleterre, signés par une personne responsable. De plus, toute invitation devait être faite par des parents ou amis du soldat, et en zone prohibée, l'assentiment du chef de Police était nécessaire. Pour Londres et ses faubourgs l'administration des Transports se chargeait des formalités. Tous les titres de congé sont recueillis au port d'embarquement et un délégué officiel les transmet lui-même au Bureau des Transports qui examine les documents, les enregistre et, si nécessaire, fait subir un examen à l'homme lui-même.

BUREAU MILITAIRE DES CONGÉS.

Après avoir réglé la question conformément aux exigences militaires et civiles, il ne restait qu'à organiser les congés en tenant compte des nécessités du service au point de vue militaire belge : questions de discipline, prolongations des congés, certificats en cas de maladie ou d'abstention, etc. On créa donc un bureau militaire sous la direction du Major Cartuyvels de Collaert et du Lieutenant Van Hoorde toujours prêt à rendre service aux soldats belges. Pour assurer l'organisation de ce bureau il était nécessaire qu'il fut en contact permanent avec le Bureau des Transports et c'est grâce à cette co-opération que le succès de cette entreprise fut assuré. L'expédition des titres de congé fut, par conséquent fait par des employés militaires après que les diverses formalités eussent été dument accomplies.

Les Belges en Angleterre furent bientôt au courant des nouvelles dispositions prises et s'habituerent peu à peu à s'adresser à ce bureau pour l'obtention des congés désirés. Quelques uns cherchèrent parfois à abuser et bien qu'un congé ne peut régulièrement être accordé que tous les quatre mois au même soldat, pretextant mariage, maladie, ou tout autre motif, faisaient demande en déans les deux mois. Ces abus furent toutefois bientôt réprimés mais demandent encore une grande attention. Les erreurs d'adresse ou les adresses incomplètes donnèrent aussi un surcroît de besogne. Il était cependant indispensable que le soldat ne perdît aucun temps à son arrivée ici. Le Département du Transport pour simplifier

la chose entreprit de libeller les adresses anglaises sur les titres, les militaires se bornant à y ajouter l'adresse **exacte** au front.

Le Bureau des Congés n'avait au début que deux officiers et trois assistants volontaires, mais la besogne fut bientôt si lourde qu'on se vit obligé d'augmenter le personnel. Pour donner une idée de l'importance du travail qui s'y accomplit disons qu'à la date du 31 Août 1917, 129,000 titres de congé avaient été préparés, enregistrés et envoyés. Ce même Bureau avait reçu et répondu à 64,251 lettres. Quelques unes de ces lettres dénotent une grande naïveté. Une brave épouse pense que le labeur de son mari serait mieux utilisé en Angleterre, et suggère qu'on l'envoie de ce côté de la Manche. Un cas sérieux est toujours examiné d'une façon toute particulière et satisfaction est donnée aux méritants. Nous pourrions citer de nombreux exemples. Bien des histoires pathétiques pourraient être racontées : bornons-nous toutefois à mentionner le fait suivant :

Un soldat arrive juste à temps pour être transporté d'urgence, du train dont il débarque, au cimetière, pour assister à l'enterrement de sa femme décédée. Ce même homme avait déjà perdu deux enfants au début de la guerre, tués par une bombe.

Le Bureau des Congés devenu si important travaille sans répit. Ses employés comprenant des soldats blessés et des assistants volontaires n'ont encore pris aucun congé. Ils sont retenus au travail même parfois le dimanche. Mais ils savent combien leur labeur est précieux, car il procure un peu de joie et de repos aux braves qui depuis plus de trois ans sont là bas dans les tranchées.

Une pareille organisation est chose rare, car il a fallu surmonter d'énormes difficultés pour placer le soldat belge sur le même pied que le soldat anglais, tenir compte des règlements de police, et s'assurer que chacun des hommes se trouvait dans les conditions requises par la Sureté anglaise ; il a été nécessaire aussi de prendre des mesures pour diminuer les possibilités de desertion.

PERSONNEL D'EMBARQUEMENT : FOLKESTONE.

Folkestone est, en général, le port d'embarquement pour les soldats belges, et nous ne manquerons pas de signaler les services rendus dans cette ville par Messieurs Leonard Franklin, Dobbs, Toke et Dumas.

Les bateaux qui au début partaient à heure régulière, suivent maintenant les marées, ce qui occasionne pour ainsi dire un travail continu de jour et de nuit. Le service

d'embarquement est des plus pénibles, surtout à l'époque des tempêtes et des bourrasques, en hiver, et pendant la nuit comme souvent c'est le cas, le transport roulant de façon effrayante. Beaucoup de ces hommes en sont encore à leur premier voyage sur mer. Il arrive parfois que pour des raisons impérieuses la traversée est suspendue. La ville est alors encombrée de soldats tous prêts à partir. Sir Stephen Penfold, maire de Folkestone et président de l'Education Committee a gracieusement mis une des écoles de la ville à la disposition des soldats belges. Mr. Wilkinson, notamment, a rendu de grands services. Souvent aussi les autorités de l'Armée du Salut ont aimablement prêté leurs baraques pour le personnel, logeant et nourrissant un grand nombre de soldats. Il y a lieu de mentionner le personnel de l'embarquement sous la direction du colonel Aytoun et du Major Noblett, ainsi que le chevalier d'Ydewalle, qui a servi d'interprète mais qui est remplacé maintenant par Mr. Dumas. Mr. Romney, Inspecteur du Port, a obligeamment mis une chambre à la disposition du personnel.

Au début, les soldats étaient divisés en trois catégories : 1°, ceux restant à Folkestone ou se rendant dans les villes au Sud de Londres, 2°, ceux à destination de Londres même, 3°, ceux allant en province.

Les soldats restant à Folkestone étaient dirigés sur le "Rink" où ils étaient logés. Une question de grande importance était de savoir comment ces hommes seraient nourris. Il existe certainement de nombreux buffets pour soldats dans les différentes stations de Londres, mais il était impossible d'encombrer ces buffets par l'arrivée de nos troupiers. Il fut par conséquent décidé qu'on les nourrirait à Folkestone même et Miss Weston aidée de Miss Stainer et de plusieurs autres dames dévouées dont les noms figurent aux annexes organisèrent un buffet. Depuis trois ans, par tous temps et malgré toutes les difficultés, elles s'acquittent de leur mission avec la meilleure grâce du monde, encourageant les soldats à leur arrivée et leur souhaitant la bienvenue. Elles ont à leur disposition une large salle bien aérée, deux grandes marmites chauffées au gaz dans lesquelles elles font le café, et deux tables en bois sur lesquelles elles coupent et préparent des sandwiches avec une rapidité étonnante. Lorsque le temps est mauvais les hommes sont amenés dans cette salle, sinon ils reçoivent leur ration dans un vaste hangar. Le Comité a également l'usage du "Grill Room" du Pavillion Hotel situé à l'entrée du port, qui est pourvu de longues tables, et pouvant recevoir de 70 à 80 hommes; les soldats rentrant de congé y reçoivent également la nourriture. Les ressources ne sont peut-être pas celles qu'on voudrait avoir, mais le point essentiel c'est que les hommes soient nourris, et bien nourris, après quoi ils sont dirigés vers le train qui les emmène dans leurs foyers.

PERSONNEL DU TRANSPORT A LONDRES.

Le vrai centre de l'œuvre est certainement la gare de Victoria, mais quelquefois les hommes arrivent aussi à Charing Cross ou à Holborn, lorsqu'il y a encombrement de trains au départ de Folkestone.

Les soldats sont examinés et reçoivent les instructions nécessaires dans leur langue maternelle avant de pouvoir continuer leur route. Il sont reçus par un sous-officier où un gendarme au bureau de la station de Victoria ou une salle à été gracieusement mise à leur disposition par la South Eastern et Chatham Railway ou bien s'ils arrivent à la gare de Charing Cross, ils vont au bureau de l'Administration des transports au General Buildings, Aldwych, ou après avoir rempli toutes les formalités ils reçoivent leur coupon de route. Ce travail paraît compliqué et on croirait à première vue qu'il fait perdre beaucoup de temps aux permissionnaires. Expliquons donc comment on y procède. Tous les titres de congé arrivent à Folkestone et sont remis d'urgence à l'administration des transports par un sous-officier. Le personnel de ce bureau comprend cinq personnes. Les titres pour Londres sont immédiatement visés. Ce travail prend un gros quart d'heure. Les "congés" ainsi estampillés sont remis aux hommes par les gendarmes après que l'on a examiné si tous les signalements sont bien exacts. Les permissionnaires pour Londres sont ensuite libres jusqu'à leur départ avant lequel ils doivent toutefois se représenter au bureau. Une autre section qui s'occupe des congés en province indique les heures de départ et d'arrivée des trains tant à l'aller qu'au retour. Voir annexes.

Des gendarmes donnent aux hommes toutes les indications nécessaires en leur remettant leurs titres de congé ainsi que leurs coupons, ce qui les empêche d'errer dans la ville où souvent au début ils s'égarèrent. Ce travail prend une heure pour deux cents hommes environ. Une chose reste alors encore à régler : c'est celle du change, car le soldat est payé en argent français, et il ne faut pas qu'il soit volé. Les Autorités belges préoccupées du bien être des réfugiés et des soldats ont pris des dispositions en conséquence. Au début de la guerre la somme échangée s'élevait pour une centaine d'hommes, approximativement à £6 ; aujourd'hui, pour ce même nombre d'hommes, la somme dépasse £50. Les grands salaires gagnés actuellement par les Belges qui aident leurs frères au front sont principalement la cause de cette augmentation. Dans les débuts, il fallait toujours assister matériellement les soldats belges, mais maintenant il est fort rare d'en trouver sans ressources.

Le personnel du département du transport doit connaître à fond plusieurs langues. Ce personnel qui se compose de quatre messieurs et quatre dames a un travail des plus plénibles. Il

a en effet du s'occuper de plus de 121,000 soldats. De l'intelligence et du tact sont nécessaires pour mener à bien une telle entreprise. L'expérience les a beaucoup aidés et ils s'acquittent merveilleusement de leur tâche. L'équipe de nuit se compose de personnes de différentes nationalités parlant couramment le français, l'anglais et le flamand. Ce travail exige un grand effort physique car les trains arrivent pendant une quinzaine de jours consécutivement la nuit, aussi les employés ne peuvent retourner chez eux, quatre jours durant, qu'à des heures très tardives. Les deux équipes s'occupent de la correspondance avec un soin tout particulier. Les noms de ces personnes figurent aux annexes.

GENDARMES.

Le chef de la mission Militaire a bien voulu mettre, des gendarmes à notre disposition, ce qui a allégé de beaucoup la besogne. Ayant rapidement appris à connaître tous les recoins de la ville ils n'ont aucune peine à mettre les soldats dans le bon chemin. Des officiers qui se tiennent également à la disposition des hommes dans les différentes stations, leur donnent toutes les indications qui leur sont nécessaires.

HOSPITALITÉ.

Le soldat belge a toujours été accueilli partout avec empressement, en Angleterre et les nombreux clubs et les comités organisés pour le recevoir comprendront que nous ne pouvons les mentionner tous. Qu'il nous soit permis toutefois de dire qu'ils ont droit à la reconnaissance publique.

BRITISH CLUB POUR SOLDATS BELGES.

Le Club en existence, 20 Manchester Square, se trouve bientôt trop petit pour les nombreuses demandes qui affluaient de tous côtés, et Mrs. Verney s'empresse de mettre à la disposition de ce Comité, son hotel, situé 12, Connaught Place, devant Hyde Park, d'où l'on a une vue magnifique. Les locaux spacieux conviennent spécialement à ce genre d'établissement. Quarante-cinq hommes peuvent y loger. Il y a plusieurs salles de bains, un billiard, une salle de correspondance, un hall à concerts et un buffet admirablement installé où d'excellents rafraîchissements sont servis. Les sous-sols servent de réfectoire et cent-cinquante soldats y sont nourris journellement. Les dames du Comité travaillent sous la direction de l'Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, dont on sait tout l'intérêt pour les réfugiés. Le Comité exécutif est sous la direction de Miss Bidwell. Les fonctions de secrétaire ont été remplies successivement par Miss Louisa Feilding, le

Capitaine Barton, C.M.G. et l'Hon. Robert Boyle qui est le secrétaire actuel. Mrs. Melville C. Ashworth membre de la Croix-rouge belge et "Commandant" du Club a consacré tout son temps et son activité à cette œuvre admirable. En réalité les hommes trouvent au Club un Home confortable avec tous les distractions qu'on peut leur donner, et ils retournent au front pleins de courage et réconfortés. A leur arrivée à Londres, ils reçoivent un carte leur renseignant exactement l'emplacement du local. Le Club tâche également de procurer aux soldats des nouvelles de chez eux, ce qui n'est par toujours aisé, mais on y parvient parfois cependant. Tous les soldats passant par Londres peuvent y être nourris. Le local est ouvert également aux réformés, employés dans les Bureaux Militaires; ils sont heureux d'y retrouver leurs camarades du front.

Une partie des hommes est logée gracieusement 20 Manchester Square dans les locaux du Comité des "Vacances du Soldat Belge" et de vingt à trente soldats sont occasionnellement accueillis par Miss Bower à Camberwell Green.

Les charges de cet établissement sont assez élevées. La commune de Paddington a exonéré l'œuvre du paiement des taxes et contributions.

Le Working Men's Belgian Fund a contribué énormément à l'entretien du Club ainsi que dureste beaucoup d'autres amis du soldat.

Au commencement de la guerre, le National Food Fund donnait gratuitement et journellement cinquante rations, et plus tard jusqu'à cent cinquante rations ce qui réduisait les frais de moitié.

A leur arrivée au Club, les soldats sont reçus par la "Commandant" toujours aimable et souriante, ayant un mot de sympathie pour chacun d'eux. Après s'être débarbouillés, ils reçoivent un bon repas chaud servi par les dames, et rien qu'à voir leur figure réjouie, on se rend compte du plaisir qu'on leur fait. Ils peuvent se renseigner sur tous les faits qui sont de nature à les intéresser. On organise chaque semaine deux soirées pour eux, et lorsque le temps est mauvais, ils improvisent eux-mêmes, des concerts.

Le Comité reçoit de nombreuses lettres de remerciements; quelques unes sont vraiment touchantes, et prouvent combien les congés passés dans de pareilles conditions relèvent le moral quelquefois abaissé des pauvres soldats. En voici plusieurs prises au hasard :

"CHER MONSIEUR,—J'ai le plaisir de vous faire savoir que "je suis arrivé sain et sauf au régiment; mais les souffrances "physiques sont bien peu de chose quand le moral est bon, et "le mien est excellent grâce à vous, Monsieur.

"A mon arrivée à Londres, le mauvais temps et l'ignorance de la langue me rendaient triste, j'avais le spleen.

“Heureusement je vous ai rencontré au British Club for Belgian Soldiers, une des plus belles et des plus utiles institutions de l'Angleterre. Je ne sais si nos physionomies laissaient entrevoir que nous étions malheureux et que nous avions besoin d'une personne compatissante pour nous aider et d'un bras ami pour nous soutenir. Vous fûtes l'une et l'autre pour nous, et vous vous êtes surpassé. Vous vous êtes efforcé à nous faire oublier nos peines, et je puis vous assurer que vous y êtes parvenu. Je suis persuadé que les amis que nous avons laissé au pays seraient consolés de savoir que des personnes charitables s'occupent des membres de leur famille qui sont au front et que les parents seraient heureux de savoir leurs enfants (de qui ils sont cruellement séparés) aidés par ces personnes. Cette séparation leur semble alors moins pénible. En leur nom et au mien je vous remercie, Monsieur, pour tout ce que vous avez fait pour moi, et je vous prie d'agréer l'expression de mes sentiments dévoués.”

“MONSIEUR,—J'aurais vivement désiré pouvoir vous revoir avant mon départ, mais j'appris ce matin qu'il me fallait partir dans l'après-midi, de sorte que je me suis vu privé de ce plaisir, et je vous assure que j'en ai été très peiné. Je ne voudrais pour rien au monde quitter l'Angleterre sans vous remercier encore une fois pour toute la bonté que vous avez eue à mon égard pendant mon séjour au British Club. Je ne vous oublierai jamais et n'oublierai pas non plus Mademoiselle ———. Je ne sais pas ce que Dieu demandera de moi, mais s'il veut mon sang pour la libération de ma pauvre patrie je le donnerai avec joie, mais si je dois mourir, je voudrais que ma dernière pensée soit pour tous ceux qui ont mis dans ma vie un peu de bonheur, et un peu de joie et de mourir en leur adressant un dernier élan de reconnaissance.”

“MONSIEUR,—Je viens vous remercier pour la grande bonté que les dames du British Club ont eues à l'égard d'un soldat pour lequel j'avais fait une demande de congé. Il n'avait pu obtenir aucune nouvelle de sa famille depuis le début de la guerre et en était bien découragé. Il me rendit visite le jour de son départ pour le front après avoir passé son congé à Londres. Il en était tout enchanté, et ne pouvait assez exprimer sa gratitude pour les bons soins dont il avait été l'objet au Club. Il me dit se sentir reconforté; son courage et sa patience lui étaient revenus, et il m'a assuré qu'il n'oublierait jamais sa visite à Londres qui demeurera toujours un souvenir vivant à son esprit.”

“MONSIEUR,—Je viens vous remercier de tout cœur pour toute la bonté que vous avez eue envers moi pendant mon séjour au British Club, qui a été des plus agréables. Je ne puis assez exprimer combien je me sentis heureux pendant

“les quelques jours que j’y ai passés. Permettez-moi de vous “dire qu’un congé passé dans de telles conditions est non “seulement agréable, mais nous fait revivre un peu la bonne “vie de famille que nous menions il y a trois ans.”

Quand à la conduite des hommes, elle a toujours été digne d’éloges comme en font foi les lignes suivantes qui émanent de la “Commandante” :

“Je ne puis parler assez hautement de leur conduite tous “jours très respectueuse et jamais aucune plainte ne m’a été “adressée par aucune de mes assistantes. Je n’aurais pu souhaiter mieux et je garderai toujours un excellent souvenir du “soldat belge.”

L’Hon. Mr. Robert Boyle, qui est secrétaire du Comité depuis la fin de 1916 devint immédiatement l’ami du soldat ; ayant beaucoup voyagé, et parlant leur langue il leur a toujours été d’un grand aide. La Noël de 1916 fut certainement un événement pour tous ceux présents alors au Club. Rien ne fut négligé pour que les soldats eussent toutes les distractions possibles : les pantomimes et les représentation cinématographiques donnant des vues des fameux tanks, leur parurent particulièrement attrayantes.

Nous devons aussi mentionner ici les divers Cinémas qui ont procuré des heures si agréables aux soldats, notamment le West End Cinema, et le Philharmonic Hall.

Des promenades et des excursions sont organisées régulièrement par des dames qui leur servent de guide et leur montrent le Jardin Zoologique, le Musée Tussaud, etc.

L’Hon. Mr. Robert Boyle, qui a eu l’occasion d’étudier plus à fond leur caractère écrit comme suit :

“Ils sont plutôt timides et il faut quelque temps avant “de les connaître ; très peu communicatifs au début, ils vous “feront bientôt leurs confidences. Demandez-leur, par exemple, “de passer une journée à la campagne ; ils n’ont pas l’air “d’apprécier la chose. Mais ne soyez pas étonné si au départ “vous vous trouvez face à face avec une vingtaine de soldats “s’amusant des plus petites choses : jeux de quilles, de balles, “courses ou autres sports, leur plaisent énormément.”

“Le cas de quelques uns de ces soldats est vraiment “digne de pitié ; l’un d’eux me raconta : ‘Ma femme est morte, “dit-on, et mes pauvres petits n’ont plus personne pour les “soigner.’”

“Un autre : “Ma femme a été fusillée par des Allemands “parcequ’elle refusait l’entrée de la maison.’”

Une femme de soldat écrit “J’ai tant maigri que vous ne me reconnaitriez certainement plus.”

Une autre encore “Maintenant nous commençons tous à avoir faim.” Tous ces cas-là ne vous fendent-ils pas le cœur ?

Vraiment, nous devons faire tout ce qui est en notre pouvoir pour ces hommes.

Le grand événement de la semaine au club est certainement le concert du Dimanche sous la direction de Mme. Carton de Wiart et de Miss Bidwell. Divers artistes y viennent régulièrement et tâchent de distraire ainsi leurs compatriotes. Notons entre-autres Mrs. Robert Lytteleton, Mr. Deffaudt, Mesdames Parys, Mertens, Forgeur, Gaby Darmon, Galerne, Tompson, Messieurs Osseley, Crommelynck, Monbars, Bucquet et autres.

Son Excellence Monsieur Hymans et Madame Hymans, Monsieur Carton de Wiart et d'autres membres de la Légation, le General Comte de Jonghe d'Ardoye, A.D.C. du roi, Chef de la Mission Militaire sont venus souvent, ayant toujours un mot aimable pour chacun de ces braves.

LES VACANCES DU SOLDAT BELGE.

L'Oeuvre "Les Vacances du Soldat Belge" dont les bureaux sont situés, 32 Grosvenor Place, S.W. 1, fut constituée grâce à l'initiative de Mr. Emile Van der Velde, Ministre d'Etat, et de Mr. Paul Hymans, Ministre de Belgique à Londres. Les Presidents de ce Comité sont l'Hon. Mrs. A. Lyttleton et Mr. Julien Warnant, Sénateur Suppléant. Mr. Washington Serruys en est le Secrétaire General. M. Demeure le Trésorier.

L'Oeuvre a pour but d'assurer dans la plus large mesure possible un période de repos à nos vaillants soldats, privés de ressources personnelles et séparés de leur famille par suite de la guerre. Ce but est des plus intéressants; il vise une idée à la fois patriotique et humanitaire parcequ'il consiste à récompenser le zèle et le courage des plus humbles et des plus déshérités parmi les défenseurs de la Patrie.

Grâce à la générosité d'une haute personnalité anglaise, la Marquise de Salisbury, le Comité eut la disposition d'un spacieux local situé 20, Manchester Square, qui fut bientôt transformé en un Home pour la réception des permissionnaires. Ceux-ci, après les formalités d'usage, conformément aux prescriptions des Autorités Militaires, sont reçus au Home où ils sont nourris et logés gratuitement pendant toute la période de leur congé. L'immeuble comprend soixante lits. Le Comité a reçu à la date du 31 Decembre 1917, environ quatre mille hommes. Les permissionnaires y ont passé environ trente mille journées de présence. La nourriture que l'on y donne est saine autant qu'abondante. Le Home possède tout le confort moderne, salles de bains, etc., de façon à donner aux soldats en congé tout ce qu'il peuvent désirer en fait de bien être.

Les permissionnaires jouissent à Manchester Square de toute la liberté compatible avec le maintien du bon ordre, et de la discipline militaire. La direction y est paternelle, et les soldats ont l'impression d'être chez eux.

En vertu de décisions prises par l'Assemblée Générale constitutive, le Comité ne pouvait faire aucun appel de fonds par voie de publicité à la charité anglaise. Il s'adressa donc à titre privé et par lettre personnelle aux notabilités belges résidant en Angleterre et à l'Etranger en signalant l'œuvre et son caractère particulier à leur bienveillante sollicitude. Grâce aux efforts des membres du Comité, les dons affluèrent bientôt et permirent de mettre sur pied l'œuvre qu'ils avaient entreprise et pour la réussite de laquelle ils se donneront tout entiers. Près de £4,000 furent recueillies jusqu'à ce jour.

Sa Majesté le roi des Belges reconnaissant l'utilité pratique de l'Institution et voulant lui donner un témoignage de sa haute bienveillance daigna faire parvenir un don personnel de 10,000 frs.

Les nombreux soldats permissionnaires invités ont tenu à différentes reprises à marquer toute leur satisfaction et ont adressé au Comité de nombreux témoignages de leur vive et profonde reconnaissance.

Le Home est dirigé par un Sergent-Major et un caporal qui se partagent les heures de service.

Comme complément à l'Oeuvre, le Comité a ouvert un Home similaire à Southampton pour les permissionnaires venant du Hâvre ou ceux qui y retournent ainsi que pour les nombreuses recrues qui rejoignent l'armée Belge à la suite de la loi militaire du 21 Juillet 1916.

FOLKESTONE.

À Folkestone, le Comité des Vacances du Soldat Belge à largement subsidie le "Cercle Militaire Albert." Ces deux œuvres qui repondaient à une nécessité fonctionnent d'une manière entièrement satisfaisante.

Rapport sur le fonctionnement du "Cercle Militaire Albert" de Folkestone depuis sa fondation 12 Janvier 1917, jusqu'à fin Août 1917:—

"Notre reconnaissance émue s'adresse à tous ceux qui ont coopéré si fraternellement à la marche et au développement de notre organisme, tant au point de vue de l'activité déployée qu'à celui du soutien financier reçu. Nos remerciements vont tout particulièrement au Comité des dames, présidé par la si dévouée Mme. Van de Vyvere qui a assumé sans une défaillance le régime du service journalier des collations distribuées aux milliers de nos braves et vaillants visiteurs. Les marques d'approbation et d'encouragement que nous avons reçues de notre bien-aimée souverain, des Autorités Civiles, Militaires

“et Religieuses les plus haut placées, forment une page inoubliable pour notre Cercle, et dont nous pouvons, à juste titre, être fiers.

“21,500 soldats permissionnaires venant du front ont passé et repassé par le Cercle dans l'espace de huit mois, formant 58 % des permissionnaires venus en Angleterre via Folkestone.

“27,600 collations, consistant en bouillon, café, pain et beurre leur ont été servies gratuitement.

“Nos opérations de change en argent anglais et français et *vice versa*, accusent un total de 252,201 francs pour 11,500 changeurs, elles ont fait réaliser à nos soldats une économie minima de 2 % soit 5,040 francs, en les arrachant aux multiples petits bureaux où on les guettait et où on les exploitait.

“Les logements fournis se sont élevés à 2,425. Cent vingt-cinq lits sont mis journellement dans d'excellentes conditions de salubrité et de propreté à la disposition des militaires à raison de 1/-.

“Nos quinze pupitres de correspondance bien alimentés ont donné à la boîte aux lettres du Cercle le chiffre énorme de 66,200 lettres, cartes, paquets, qui, estampillés au cachet du Cercle l'ont fait connaître dans les moindres villages d'Angleterre, de Belgique, et de France.

“D'accord avec M. le Consul de France et les Autorités Militaires, nous avons offert l'hospitalité la plus cordiale et la plus franche à nos amis et vaillants frères d'armes français, dont 635 ont été nos hôtes.

“Nos ressources financières sont assurées et alimentées par 'l'Oeuvre des Vacances du Soldat Belge,' les dons et les produits de fêtes de bienfaisance que nous avons organisées et qui se partagent toutes nos charges d'exploitation.

“Un Comité de l'Oeuvre de soldats invalides Belges constitué au Cercle et à la tête du quel se trouve notre dévoué collaborateur M. L'Avocat Joye a vu le chiffre de 21,000 cartes postales illustrées vendues au profit de cette œuvre de reconnaissance si belle et si méritoire.

“Enfants des Flandres et de la Wallonie retrouvent au Cercle Albert cette ambiance, cette atmosphère de cordialité et de bonhomie de la famille et du foyer perdu qui leur donnent l'apaisement des souffrances et des horreurs vécues, la force nécessaire pour des heures plus dures encore, la confiance inébranlable dans le triomphe de la cause sainte et sacrée du Droit, de la Justice, et de la Liberté.

“Conscients de la grandeur de la lutte, de la nécessité d'accomplir leur tâche, segment de l'évolution en marche, ils donnent sans regret leur sang pour l'émancipation des générations à venir.”

SOUTHAMPTON.

De ce port important arrivaient et partaient journellement un grand nombre de soldats, surtout les recrues allant en France pour y être instruits en vue de prendre rang dans l'Armée Active. Les employés de Compagnies de chemins de fer ont toujours montré beaucoup d'amabilité envers le soldat belge, l'aidant en cas de nécessité et lui donnant les indications nécessaires. La London & South Western Railway Co. offre une grande salle située près du point d'embarquement capable de contenir cent à cent vingt hommes. Elle assura également le chauffage et la lumière.

Le comité du "British Club pour Soldats Belges" aidé du "Local Government Board" installa l'immeuble de manière à ce que les soldats puissent y être logés et nourris. Depuis le premier janvier au 31 Août 1917, 7,488 soldats belges et 2,537 recrues ont passé par cet établissement. Les dépenses se sont élevées à £589. Mr. Ruffin, du département du Transport a eu la direction de l'œuvre qui maintenant fonctionne sous le contrôle et avec l'assistance financière du "Comité des Vacances de Soldat Belge."

Le Capitaine H. D. Patterson officier contrôleur militaire a contribué puissamment au succès de cette entreprise, procurant les denrées alimentaires au même prix qu'à l'armée Britannique.

Mention doit aussi être faite de Mr. Tedder, Alliés Officier, Mr. Pettet, administrateur de la marine, et Mr. Hodges, commissaire en chef, de M. Fladgate, Consul de Belgique, et de Mr. Andrews. Les Réfugiés belges, de même que les soldats ont, à maintes reprises, témoigné leur reconnaissance à ces différentes personnalités.

OEUVRE DU CONGÉ DU SOLDAT DE L'INDEPENDANCE BELGE.

Toutes les œuvres militaires, tant belges qu'anglaises, quoique dirigées séparément travaillent cependant ensemble, ce qui leur facilite la besogne.

Monsieur A. Lemonnier, Directeur de l'Indépendance Belge, bien connu pour sa générosité, fit appel à ses compatriotes en faveur des soldats belges. De Juin 1915 à Juin 1917, 2,362 hommes purent être reçus en congé. Les frais s'élevèrent à £3,000. Les soldats sont logés et nourris, et reçoivent 5s. d'argent de poche. Des distractions gratuites leur sont également procurées. Tous n'ont assez d'éloges pour l'œuvre si utile de Mr. Lemonnier.

LE COMITÉ DU KING ALBERT HOSPITAL.

Le Comité du King Albert's Hospital a déjà été mentionné, mais il ne rentrerait pas dans le cadre de ce livre de s'étendre longuement sur l'organisation et les travaux de cet important Comité. Je ne parlerai donc que brièvement de cette œuvre qui fut créée par le Gouvernement Belge pour s'occuper des soldats belges blessés et convalescents en Angleterre.

Sous la haute direction de son Président, M. le Baron C. Goffinet, cet organisme a rendu de grands services. Dix mille soldats belges ont été admis ou ont été en traitement dans les divers hopitaux fondés par ce Comité.

Voir aux annexes les détails concernant la composition du corps médical, etc.

Le Comité comprend parmi ses membres Mr. le Chevalier Carton de Wiart, ainsi que d'autres personnalités Belges. Parmi les membres anglais, il faut citer Sir Arthur Downes et Mr. T. S. Oxley, nommés par le Président du Local Government Board en raison des services signalés qu'ils ont rendus dès le début de la guerre aux organisations de réfugiés. Mr. Paul May a également pris une part active dans les travaux du Comité dont il a été le secrétaire jusqu'à son départ pour la Chine comme ministre de Belgique.

Depuis son départ, ce poste honorifique a été occupé par Mr. R. de Gottal.

Le premier hopital ouvert par le Comité fut "Staffordshire House," Store Street, W.C., local mis gracieusement à la disposition de l'œuvre par Mr. W. Bourne et Mr. H. Hollingsworth, et converti en hopital à leurs frais. Ces messieurs ont aussi contribué largement aux dépenses courantes de cet établissement et leur expérience commerciale a été très utile au Comité.

Le nombre de soldats blessés et convalescents augmentant continuellement, de nouveaux locaux furent nécessaires. Le Shoreditch Board of Guardians ainsi que d'autres institutions publiques mirent à la disposition de l'œuvre plusieurs établissements dont les frais furent défrayés en partie par le Local Government Board, et en partie par le Comité lui-même.

GLASGOW.

Les mouvements des soldats sont contrôlés depuis leur départ de Calais jusqu'à leur retour et cette surveillance s'étend jusqu'en Ecosse. Les Ecossais se sont toujours montrés très généreux envers leur amis les Belges.

Mr. Alexandre Walker, Hon. Secrétaire du Comité de Glasgow, chargé de l'enregistrement des Réfugiés belges en Ecosse, trouva malgré ses nombreuses occupations, le temps

de se consacrer spécialement aux soldats, mettant à leur disposition, à l'arrivée des trains de Londres, des guides pour les conduire à destination.

Le Comité de Glasgow reçoit, depuis plus de deux ans trente hommes par semaine. Plus de trois mille soldats ont été hébergés en Écosse où ils trouvent toutes les distractions possibles. Ils visitent les sites remarquables, tels que le Loch Lomond, etc.

Les permissionnaires n'oublieront jamais l'accueil hospitalier qu'ils y ont reçu.

LE HOME DE CONVALESCENCE DE TORQUAY.

Il existe au Sud de l'Angleterre, dans un climat doux et agréable, un Home de convalescence pour soldats belges, contrôlé par un comité de Londres, sous la direction de Mme. Carton de Wiart et de Mme. Van de Velde, où les convalescents passent quelques jours de repos bien mérités avant de reprendre le chemin des tranchées.

Le Home est dirigé à Torquay par Mesdames Fabribeckers de Cortils et Grace, et Monsieur l'Abbé de Louche s'y consacre aussi avec un grand dévouement.

COMITÉ DE PROTECTION POUR LES SOLDATS RÉFORMÉS.

Le soldat réformé ne devait certes pas être oublié, et un Comité disposant de faibles ressources, fut constitué pour lui venir en aide.

Mlle. Léa Rotschild qui en est la distinguée secrétaire a fait beaucoup pour améliorer le sort de ceux qui se trouvaient en détresse. Une médaille fut créée pour les réformés dont les blessures ne sont pas apparentes. Ceci empêche qu'ils ne soient méconnus par le public.

Des dons de vêtements et des prêts d'argent leur furent accordés. Deux mille hommes reçurent ainsi l'assistance jusqu'au jour où la Commission de Révision se chargea des réformés.

En Mai 1916, le Comité eut le malheur de perdre son dévoué Président, Mr. Emile Royer qui avait pris les intérêts de ces hommes à cœur. Mr. le Sénateur Jules Franck que Mr. Royer avait désigné pour le remplacer prit alors le fauteuil de la Présidence. Il a beaucoup contribué à améliorer le sort des soldats réformés et s'est occupé spécialement de la question de leur rééducation.

LE RETOUR AU FRONT.

Le retour du soldat vers le front est l'objet d'une surveillance toute spéciale et a été organisé de manière à éviter les négligences et les retards. Le départ est fixé à 5.30 du matin, et comme les omnibus et les tubes ne circulent pas à cette heure, les hommes doivent se trouver la veille au soir à la gare de Victoria où des arrangements ont été pris par Messieurs Bennett, Evan, MacDonald et Bulbeck, qui depuis le commencement de la guerre ont veillé à ce que les hommes puissent trouver à se loger facilement. La plus importante maison, "The Belgian Soldier's Hostel," est située 44 Grosvenor Place, où deux généreuses dames anglaises, Madame Tremeneheere et Mlle. Bertie, ont installé 80 lits, une salle de lecture et un réfectoire, et où depuis le 3 Novembre 1916, 22,866 soldats belges ont été hébergés.

Les hommes y reçoivent le soir à souper et un déjeuner le matin avant leur départ. Trois belles salles de bain sont à leur disposition et leur permettent de prendre des bains chauds ou froids à toute heure. Il y a encore l'hôtellerie de l'Armée du Salut, 48 Grosvenor Gardens, placée sous la direction de Mr. Brown dont l'inlassable bonté envers les hommes fait l'objet des louanges de tous.

Le Buckingham Palace Hotel repris par le "Church Army" est maintenant un asile pour soldats où les Belges peuvent également en cas de nécessité être admis. Sa Majesté le roi d'Angleterre y a mis 96 lits à la disposition des hommes. Les soldats tant Belges qu'Anglais y sont les hôtes du roi. Le soldat belge lorsqu'il est au courant de ce détail est très désireux de pouvoir y loger, et Mr. Stroud qui à la direction de ce Home, à maintes reprises, a fait leur éloge et loué leur bonne tenue et la promptitude avec laquelle ils se lèvent quand ils sont appelés, même à 4.30 du matin.

Il y a aussi lieu de mentionner la hutte de la Société des Dames Catholiques située près de Victoria, où des milliers de soldats belges ont trouvé à se loger.

De nombreux soldats belges ont aussi été accueillis à l'hôtel situé Artillery Row, Westminster, grâce à la générosité de Mr. Richardson.

À la fin de l'automne 1916, Miss Fielding fit la proposition suivante à Mr. Bennet :—

"Ma mère, ma sœur et moi, nous éprouvons une véritable peine lorsque nous pensons à ces pauvres soldats belges qui doivent pendant les nuits froides attendre devant la gare de Victoria le départ du train, et nous mettons à leur disposition dans notre maison 48 Grosvenor Gardens, une de nos chambres du rez de chaussée. Vous pouvez y amener tous les soirs de quatre à cinq hommes qui ne pourraient trouver

“à se loger ailleurs. Nous les éveillerons à l'heure voulue et nous verrons qu'ils reçoivent leur déjeuner au Y.M.C.A. comme nous ne pouvons préparer leur repas à une heure si matinale.”

Miss Fielding à qui l'on faisait remarquer le danger auquel elle s'exposait en recevant des étrangers dans sa maison, répondit :—“Nous ne craignons rien, voici la clef.”

Il fut fait droit à sa demande et régulièrement depuis lors, des soldats lui furent amenés ; tous se conduisirent admirablement et témoignèrent leur reconnaissance en écrivant des lettres réellement touchantes dans leur simplicité.

Mr. Macdonald pendant les nuits d'hiver, reçut aussi jusque sept à huit soldats belges. Il n'eut également jamais qu'à se louer d'eux.

Le congé en Angleterre doit certainement remonter le moral du soldat belge, et la lettre suivante en fait foi ; elle est écrite par un jeune homme qui n'avait pas dix-sept ans au moment de la déclaration de la guerre, et qui jusqu'à la fin de 1916 n'était pas encore venu en congé. Il fut invité par l'œuvre admirable “Le Congé du Soldat” créée par *L'Indépendance Belge* :—

“MONSIEUR,—Je me fais un plaisir de répondre à votre lettre du 1er courant, qui me touche profondément. Je ne sais vraiment comment vous remercier pour le réconfort et le bien que vous m'avez faits. Je suis plus heureux à présent car je ne me sens plus si seul, malgré la barrière qui me sépare de ma famille. Veuillez croire, Monsieur, que vos bonnes paroles m'ont rendu le courage et l'énergie qui sont si nécessaires pour supporter les souffrances actuelles. Comme vous me l'avez fait espérer, je pense que bientôt la Belgique sera délivrée des Barbares qui l'oppressent. Mais si cela doit se faire encore longtemps attendre, peu importe, pourvu que nous soyons victorieux.

“Je vous prierais, Monsieur, de bien vouloir m'écrire souvent ; l'heure de la délivrance viendra. Lorsque je me sentirai découragé, je relirai vos bonnes lettres, et le courage et l'espoir me reviendront.

“En espérant pouvoir vous lire, je termine ma lettre en vous priant d'accepter les sincères remerciements de votre humble et dévoué serviteur.”

A diverses reprises le service de Folkestone-Calais s'est trouvé suspendu et les soldats ont du être envoyés au Camp d'Earls Court, où le directeur, Mr. Powell, a toujours fait ce qui était en son pouvoir pour leur rendre le séjour agréable. Il a également accordé l'hospitalité aux soldats dont les familles se trouvaient à Earl's Court.

Les missionnaires belges ont non seulement été accueillis chaleureusement par leurs compatriotes mais aussi

par les Anglais qui tous ont compris la nécessité qu'il y avait d'assister ces braves, animés du même esprit, et se battant pour le Droit, le Roi et la Patrie.

Le 46^e rapport annuel du "Local Government Board," 1916-1917, relatif aux soldats belges dit :—

"La conduite de ces hommes à toujours été exemplaire." Nous croyons que cette phrase n'a pas besoin de commentaires.

LOIS SUR LE RECRUTEMENT, LE TRAVAIL DES MUNITIONS, ET LE SERVICE MILITAIRE.

Nous avons déjà parlé dans ce travail, des soldats blessés et réformés et bien que ce petit livre soit spécialement consacré aux soldats belges en congé, nous dirons également quelques mots d'autres questions d'ordre militaire dont le Département des Transports a eu également à s'occuper.

Une importante Usine de munitions où la main-d'œuvre belge seule doit être employée a été créée sous par les soins du Ministère des Munitions. Cette usine ne devait pas servir d'abri aux hommes désireux de se dérober à leurs obligations militaires ; aussi des mesures furent prises pour qu'il y eut aucun abus. On a parfois entendu dire que les Belges s'étaient réfugiés dans ce pays pour échapper au service militaire ; cette insinuation aurait du, de temps à autre, être réfutée dans la presse anglaise.

Si ce n'était l'extrême réserve des Belges, la réfutation aurait sans doute déjà été faite.

Rappelons le fait suivant : 300 Réfugiés arrivèrent un jour à la gare de Liverpool Street. Ils avaient affronté tous les dangers pour échapper à la tyrannie allemande et venir se joindre à leurs frères. Quelques journaux mal renseignés signalèrent ces hommes comme étant des "réfractaires," et demandèrent pourquoi il leur était permis de se réfugier en Angleterre au lieu de servir au front. Cette nouvelle qui se répandit bientôt dans le public causa une impression pénible parmi les réfugiés.

Mr. Powell du Local Government Board signale dans un rapport comme un fait qui l'a particulièrement frappé pendant le temps qu'il fut en fonctions à Earl's Court, le succès de la campagne de recrutement faite ici, en 1914 et 1915. L'enthousiasme était si grand qu'une propagande intensive ne fut pas nécessaire. Cependant quelques affiches attrayantes, en français et en flamand, modelées sur les affiches anglaises furent placées en évidence par Mme. Rue et Miss Patton qui connaissent à fond le français et le flamand. Pendant les premières semaines, le petit bureau de recrutement de Finsbury

Square fut insuffisant pour enregistrer le grand nombre de volontaires qui se présentaient chaque jour. On se vit forcé d'ouvrir au camp même, un bureau militaire qui fut placé sous la direction du Commandant Baron de Favereau. On y examinait les recrues et on les enrôlait séance tenante. On leur remettait des vêtements, un peu d'argent de poche et un petit médaillon avec les drapeaux belges et anglais, et l'inscription: "Volontaires d'Earl's Court." Trois fois par semaine, cent à cent-cinquante hommes partaient en bande, musique en tête, au milieu d'un enthousiasme délirant, chantant les airs nationaux, mêlés de "Tipperary" et se dirigeant vers les tubes et de là à la gare de Waterloo où ils étaient amplement fournis de cigarettes, de petits pains, etc.

En automne 1915, le Capitaine Commandant Braeckman succéda au baron de Favereau rappelé en France. Lorsque le travail devint moins important, Mr. Braeckman ayant été nommé commandant de la Place de Londres, le Bureau du Camp fut placé sous la direction du Sergeant-Major Mouchette.

L'assistance prêtée par Mr. Campbell, Directeur du Transport fut des plus précieuses. Environ 5,000 volontaires furent conduits en France avant l'introduction du service obligatoire. Maintenant encore les volontaires reviennent en congé au Camp auprès de leurs familles, et bon nombre de soldats y ont déjà été reçus. L'application de la loi sur le recrutement dans un pays étranger ne fut certainement pas chose aisée, et le résultat obtenu fut d'autant plus remarquable.

Le département militaire s'occupa aussi des soldats proposés à la réforme; tous ceux capables de reprendre du service furent renvoyés au front, les autres placés dans des fabriques de munitions, et les réformés définitifs renvoyés en France dans des écoles spéciales fondées pour la rééducation de ces malheureux.

Il y eut cependant quelques exceptions. Les hommes ayant perdu les deux jambes furent gardés en Angleterre et confiés aux soins de Miss Heyneman à California House, où d'excellents résultats ont été obtenus.

Un autre établissement que nous devons signaler et qui a obtenu des résultats surprenants est celui de Crosby Hall à Chelsea qui se trouve sous la haute surveillance de l'Hon. Mrs. Lyttleton et Mrs. Erskine Childers.

Lady St. Helier ouvrit un Home à Ewell pour permettre aux hommes d'apprendre la vannerie. Cette œuvre est maintenant continuée à Surbiton sous la présidence de Mme. Carton de Wiart.

Les aveugles ne furent pas oubliés. A St. Dunstan's, Sir Arthur Pearson leur ouvrit ses portes, et les soldats aveugles belges comme leurs camarades anglais y apprirent de nouveaux métiers.

Lorsque les premières usines de munitions furent installées quelques soldats de métier furent ramenés du front et placés dans ces usines afin d'instruire leurs compatriotes et les résultats obtenus dépassèrent l'attente.

Le département du Transport s'occupa ensuite des civils, et l'on doit rendre justice aux jeunes gens belges exilés dans ce pays. Des le début ils s'enrôlèrent avec empressement, n'attendant pas que la loi militaire les y obligeât. Nombre de jeunes Belges passent aussi la frontière pour rejoindre leurs compatriotes, laissant derrière eux des parents qui parfois vendent ce qu'ils possèdent pour aider leurs fils à remplir leur devoir envers la Patrie. Ces hommes sont reçus en Angleterre par Mr. Roundell du Local Government Board et Mrs. Henry occupe spécialement d'eux à leur arrivée à Gravesend.

Personne n'a oublié l'histoire du remorqueur Schelde au service du gouverneur allemand d'Anvers. Ce petit vapeur qui avait à bord un nombre de valeureux belges allant rejoindre l'armée au front, partit d'Anvers pour se rendre en Hollande, battant pavillon allemand et fut salué en route par les postes allemands !

Le service obligatoire est en vigueur en Belgique, mais il n'est peut-être pas sans intérêt d'exposer brièvement en quoi il consiste.

Les hommes sont classés par groupes selon leur âge et selon qu'ils sont célibataires ou mariés. Tout sujet belge célibataire dans sa vingtième année est donc appelé sous les drapeaux et classé dans le groupe I., à moins qu'il ne soit reconnu inapte au service militaire.

Les hommes qui physiquement ou à cause de leur âge, ne peuvent être envoyés au front, sont placés dans les services auxiliaires du groupe I., et sont ainsi utilisés dans les lignes de communications aux transports de l'arrière. Le système des groupes permet d'appeler les hommes jusqu'à l'âge de quarante ans. Les hommes mariés sont classés dans les groupes IV. et V. selon leur âge et dans certains cas dans le groupe VII. Ceux-ci sont disponibles si l'occasion s'en fait sentir pour les services auxiliaires. Il est aisé de se rendre compte qu'avec ce système simple et efficace aucun homme n'échappe à ses obligations.

Les soldats ayant été appelés au service militaire quittent leurs foyers avec la certitude que leur femme et famille ne seront pas dans le besoin. Une rémunération de milice leur est accordée par le gouvernement et, en plus, la femme, si elle incapable de travailler, a droit à l'assistance du Comité d'Aldwyck. Elle est ainsi placée sur le même pied que l'épouse du soldat anglais.

Les familles des soldats savent qu'elles trouveront toujours en Messieurs Leggett et Tudor Owen des amis dévoués et

bienveillants. On ne saurait assez insister sur le fait que les Belges ne sont ni négligés ni abandonnés en Angleterre, contrairement aux insinuations malveillantes lancées par certaines feuilles ennemies en Belgique envahie.

Nous croyons devoir rappeler aux intéressés que les familles des soldats belges désireuses de recevoir les leurs en congé en Angleterre, et qui n'en ont pas les moyens peuvent toujours s'adresser au War Refugees Committee pour obtenir les secours nécessaires à cet effet, et leur requête est certaine d'être toujours examinée avec la plus grande bienveillance.



APPENDIX.

**STATEMENT SHOWING THE NUMBER OF BELGIAN
SOLDIERS WHO PASSED
THROUGH LONDON ON LEAVE TO DECEMBER, 1917.**

MONTH	1915	1916	1917
<i>January</i>	1,218	1,766	5,009
<i>February</i>		3,706	2,490
<i>March</i>		4,159	3,830
<i>April</i>		2,521	3,028
<i>May</i>		2,922	7,181
<i>June</i>		5,225	5,759
<i>July</i>	5,105	791	6,730
<i>August</i>	6,071	780	6,226
<i>September</i>	2,483	2,272	6,641
<i>October</i>	3,865	5,753	6,088
<i>November</i>	11,505	6,500	6,575
<i>December</i>	404	6,334	6,865
<i>Total</i> ...	30,651	42,729	66,422

To the Chief Constable: or

Superintendent of Police, at—

TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT,

War Refugees,

General Buildings,

Aldwych, London, W.C. 2.

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SIR,

The undermentioned Belgian { soldier has } been granted a period of leave and { is } proceeding to
your district :—

SOLDIERS'			PERIOD OF LEAVE.		Congé No.
No.	Rank.	Name.	From	To	

I should be glad if I may be notified in case of non-arrivals, or in the case of any soldier whose congé form does not bear one of the numbers notified to you. This form should be returned with the report.

I am, Sir,

Yours truly,

H. CAMPBELL,

Transport Superintendent.

Form No. 212.

ARMÉE BELGE. BUREAU MILITAIRE DES CONGÉS.

En réponse à votre lettre reçue ce jour, je vous pris de remplir la formule ci-dessous, de la faire viser par le Chef de la Police Locale et de la renvoyer au →

Bureau Militaire des
Congés

In reply to your letter received to-day, please fill in the form below, and after having it signed by the Chief of the Local Police kindly return it to →

General Buildings,

In antwoord op Uwien geerden brief heden ontvangen, verzoek ik Ued hiermede onderstaande formulair te willen volledigen; dit formulair moet door de Engelsche locale Politie Overheden getekend worden, en terug gezonden aan

(Aldwych) LONDON

Je, soussigné

I, the undersigned

Ik, ondergeteekend

No

No

No

Rue

Street

Straat

demeurant à

living at

verblyvende

declare être en mesure d'héberger et de nourrir à mes frais pendant son congé en Grande Bretagne.

hereby declare that I am in a position to board and feed at my own expense during his leave in Great Britain.

verklaar hierby by eigene middelen te kunnen innemen en bekostigen gedurende zyn verbyf in Groot Brittanje.

Cette formule doit être visée par un représentant du Comité local, si l'invitant est soutenu par ce Comité. Dans ce cas, le militaire invité doit être mari, ou le père, ou le fils ou le frère de la personne qui invite.

In the case when the applicant is maintained by a Local Committee, this undertaking must be signed by a representative on behalf of the Local Committee and is only admissible in the case of a husband or father or son or brother.

Dit formulair moet gezegd worden door een lid der lokaal Kemiteit, wanneer den uitnoediger er door ondersteund wordt. In dit geval moet den soldaat echtgenoot, vader, of zoon of broeder van den uitnoediger zyn.

Nom du soldat

Name of Soldier

Naam van den soldaat

Adresse complète du soldat

Full Address of Soldier

Volledig adres van den soldaat

Degré de parenté

Relationship

Verwantschap

1917

Signature

Hanteeken

CERTIFICATE.

I have no objection to the above-named soldier visiting this area and that the particulars are, as far as can be ascertained, correct.

Chief of Police.

Date.....

I do not approve of the above-named soldier visiting this area.

Chief of Police.

Date.....

N.B.—Pour le district de Londres l'approbation de la police doit être remplacée par celle du Transport Office, General Buildings, Aldwych.

N.B.—In the London area the consent of the Police must be replaced by that of the Transport Office, General Buildings, Aldwych.

N.B.—Voor London en district de Toelating der Politie moet vervangen zijn door dat van den Transport Bureau, General Buildings, Aldwych.

Prière écrire très lisiblement les noms et adresses afin d'éviter tout retard dans l'expédition des titres de congés.

Will you kindly note to write clearly the names and addresses, so as to avoid all delay in the forwarding of forms for leave.

Gefield de namen en adressen zeer duidelijk te schrijven om geen tijd te verliezen in 't opsturen van de verlof brieven.

Armée Belge.

SIGNALEMENT.
DESCRIPTION.

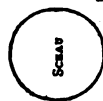
Taille *Height*
 Age apparent *Apparent Age*
 Corpulence *Build*
 Cheveux *Hair*
 Signes particuliers *Distinctive signs*

INVITATION.

Invité par
 Adresse

Nom du militaire

Congé du au



Le Commandant du Bureau des
Congés.

LONDRES, LE 191

Pendant la durée de son séjour hors du Royaume-Uni il doit se conformer aux prescriptions applicables aux militaires en congé sur le Continent. En cas de perte dit
 Gedurende het verlof van den soldaat buiten het Vereenigde Koninkryk van Groot Britanië moet hy in alle gevallen aan de verplichtingen voldoen dewelke de soldaten
 moeten vervullen op verlof in het buitenland. By verlies van den coupon, wordt geen anderen coupon kosteloos vergoed.
During the soldier's leave in France he must, in all cases, comply with the regulations as for soldiers on leave on the Continent. Take care of railway tickets;
if lost will not be replaced.

AVIS—BELANDRIJKBERICHT—IMPORTANT.

coupon, un nouveau coupon se sera pas délivré gratuitement.
 By verlies van den coupon, wordt geen anderen coupon kosteloos vergoed.

T.S.V.P.
P.T.O.

Date 191

TITRE DE CONGÉ—VERLOFSBEWIJS—FURLOUGH PASS.

Le
 De
 The
 commandant le
 bevelhebber van het
 commandement der

accordé à (Nom)
 verleend aan (naam)
 granted to (Surname)
 (Prénoms)
 (Voornamen)
 (Chr. Name)

(grade)
 (rank)
 Numéro de la matricule
 nummer
 (Soldier's No.)

pour en jouir à
 zich te begetven naar
 te be liden al
 rentré à son corps le
 zijn korps te sijn den
 his self on the
 jours
 een verlof van
 dagen on
 days
 sous l'obligation d'être
 met verplichting terug aan
 with obligation to rejoin

à midi 191 's middags

Empreinte du pouce gauche.

Scau
du
Régiment.

Scau du
Commandant
de la Gare
Maritime.

Left thumb print.

VU POUR

LE

191 .

Signature de l'officier accordant le congé.
 Signature of officer granting the leave.

Commandant Militaire Belge
 de la Gare Maritime de Calais.

Signature de porteur :
 Handtekening Van den dragers :

IMPORTANT.**AVIS.**

1. Le porteur de ce titre de Congé doit être en tenue militaire pendant toute la durée de son congé.
2. En Grande Bretagne, le porteur est tenu de se présenter personnellement dès son arrivée et à chaque changement d'adresse à la police locale du lieu où il se rend et il doit accomplir la même formalité à son départ. Pour le district de Police de Londres le porteur doit se présenter au Transport Superintendent (rez de chaussée), General Buildings, Aldwych, W.C.
3. Les prolongations de congé ne peuvent être sollicitées que pour des raisons exceptionnelles. Toute demande sera adressée au Lieutenant Général, Chef de la Mission Militaire, 35, Grosvenor Place, Londres, S.W.
4. Ce titre ne procure aucun privilège ni exemption spéciale des règlements ou prescriptions militaires.
5. Ce titre doit être produit à toute réquisition des autorités Belges ou Françaises, et des officiers Britanniques suivants :—
 Port Officers,
 Officiers de débarquement ou d'embarquement, ou
 Toute autorité militaire, ou toute personne déléguée.
 Tout soldat ou matelot en faction ou chargé d'un service de surveillance.
 Tout officier de police, Customs or Excise, et tout Aliens Officer.
6. La perte de ce titre doit être immédiatement signalée par le propriétaire à la police locale, et au Commandant Belge de la place où il est arrivé, soit en Angleterre soit en France. Le numéro du titre de Congé doit être indiqué à l'autorité militaire.
7. En cas de maladie le porteur de ce titre doit avoir 'immédiatement la police locale, et le Commandant du Bureau des Congés à Londres (General Buildings, Aldwych). Si le porteur du titre se trouve à Folkestone or Southampton, il avertira le Commandant Belge de la place.
8. Tout militaire arrivant en congé de convalescence en Angleterre doit immédiatement faire connaître son nom et son adresse au Directeur du Service de Santé Belge en Angleterre, King Albert's Hospital, 76, Gower Street, London.

NOTICE.

1. The bearer of this Pass must be in uniform during the entire period of his leave.
2. In Great Britain the bearer is warned that he must report himself in person to the local police on arrival at his destination and again on departure, or on any change of address. In the London District he must report to Transport Superintendent (ground floor), General Buildings, Aldwych, W.C.
3. Applications for extension of leave can only be made for very exceptional reasons; all applications must be made to the Lieutenant General, Chief de la Mission Militaire, 35, Grosvenor Place, London, S.W.
4. This Pass carries no privileges or exemptions from War Regulations or Orders.
5. This Pass must be produced for inspection on demand by any of the Belgian or French Authorities and by any of the following British Officials :—
 Embarkation, Disembarkation, or Port Officers,
 Officiers de débarquement, Military Authority, or Person authorized by him,
 Any soldier or sailor on sentry or patrol or other similar duty.
 Any Officer of Police, Customs or Excise, or Aliens Officer.
6. The loss of this Pass must be notified immediately by the owner to the local police, and to the Belgian Embarkation Officer at the port of landing, whether in England or France. The number of the Pass must be notified to the military authorities.
7. In case of illness the bearer of this Pass must immediately advise the local police and the Officer commanding the Bureau des Congés, London (General Buildings, Aldwych), except when the bearer is in Folkestone or Southampton, when he will advise the Belgian Embarkation Officer.
8. Every soldier who comes to England on leave for reasons of health must immediately make known his name and address to the Directeur du Service de Santé Belge in England, King Albert's Hospital, 76, Gower Street, London.

BERICHT.

- 1.—De drager van een verlofbewijs moet in uniform zijn gedurende den ganschen duur van syn verlof.
- 2.—De drager wordt verwittigt dat in Engeland hij zich persoonlijk moet aanbieden bij de politie der plaats waar hij zich begeeft bij zijne aankomst, en bij iedere verandering van adres, en dat hij dezelfde formaliteit moet vervullen bij zijn vertrek. Voor London District moet den drager deszich aanbieden bij de Transport Superintendent, (rez de chaussée), General Buildings, Aldwych, London.
- 3.—Verlengingen van verlof mogen enkel aangevraagd worden voor bijzondere redenen. Alle aanvraag zal gericht worden tot den Lieutenant General, Hoofd der Belgische Militaire Zending, 35, Grosvenor Place, London, S.W.
- 4.—Dit verlofbewijs verschafft niet de minste voorrechten noch onttrekking aan de militaire wetten en voorschriften.
- 5.—Het verlofbewijs moet vertoond worden op gelijk welke aanvraag der Belgische of Fransche overheden, en der volgende Engelsche beambten :—
 Officiers, gelast met de ontschepping en de inachting der mannen, alsook de havenmeesters.
 Al de militaire overheden of hunne afgevaardigden.
 Alle soldaten of matrozen op wacht of gelast met den overzichtsdiens.
 Alle officieren der openbare machi, tolbeambten, enz.
- 6.—In geval de drager van een verlofbewijs dit stuk zou komen te verliezen, moet hij er oogenblikkelijk kennis van geven aan de politie der plaats waar hij verblijft, alsook aan de Bevelhebber van het militaire bureau waar hij ontscheept is, hetzij in Engeland of Frankrijk. Hij moet ook de nummer van het verlofbewijs opgeven aan de militaire overheid.
- 7.—In geval van ziekte, moet de drager er oogenblikkelijk bericht van geven aan de politie der plaats waar hij verblijft, alsook aan de Bevelhebber van het Verlofbureau te London (General Buildings, Aldwych). Wanneer de drager zich te Folkestone of te Southampton bevindt, zal hij heel eenvoudig de Bevelhebber van het militaire bureau der plaats verwittigen.
- 8.—Alle militairen die voor redenen van gezondheid in Engeland hebben moet en dadelijk hun naam en adres bekend maken aan den Directeur van den Service de Santé Belge in Engeland, King Albert's Hospital, 76, Gower Street, London.

RENSEIGNEMENTS TRÈS IMPORTANTS. BELANGRIJKE INLICHTINGEN.

Take care of railway tickets; if lost will not be replaced.

ATTENTION: En cas de perte du coupon, un nouveau coupon ne sera pas délivré gratuitement.

LET OP: By verlies van de coupon, wordt geen andere coupon kosteloos vergoed.

Départ de Londres

Vertrek uit Londen

Arrivée à

Aankomst te

RETOUR.

AVIS IMPORTANT.

I.—En arrivant à destination le militaire doit s'informer de l'heure à laquelle il devra prendre le train de retour pour Londres.

II.—Le militaire doit arriver à Londres la veille de son départ pour Folkestone.

III.—Les congés se terminant à midi et le train pour Folkestone quittant Londres à 5.30 du matin (Victoria Station) il faut que le militaire prenne ce train la veille de l'expiration du Congé.

IV.—Le présent bulletin doit être conserve pendant tout la durée du Congé.

TERUGKOMST.

BELANGRIJK BERICHT.

I.—Bij aankomst op zijne bestemming moet de militair inlichtingen nemen, welke uur hij de trein moet nemen om naar Londen terug te keeren.

II.—De militair moet den dag van te voren in Londen aankomen voor zijn vertrek naar Folkestone.

III.—Het verlof eindigt 's middags om 12 uren, en den trein voor Folkestone vertrek 's morgens om 5.30 uren in de Victoria statie, daarom moet den militair den trein nemen op uur boven genoemd en dag voor dat zijn verlof eindigt.

IV.—Deze bulletin moet in bewaring gehouden worden gedurende het verlof.

Form No 213.

LONDON TRANSPORT STAFF.

*Mr. H. CAMPBELL, Transport Superintendent.	
*Miss KASTOR „ BRUCE MRS. EDWARDS „ JARVIS *Miss KNOX MRS. MACKENZIE * „ MUHLEN *Miss NORTON	*Mr. DE CATER * „ BLOM „ CAOLA „ DE RIDDER „ FAIRBROTHER * „ POUPAERT „ ROWLANDSON „ SHEARER * „ VERSCHUEREN

* Those marked with an asterisk are NIGHT WORKERS,

FOLKESTONE STAFF.

Mr. A. E. TOKE, Local Government Board Representative.

Mr. DUMAS, Embarkation Officer.

Miss WESTON SERJEANT SARLET LOUIS MONGEART	GASTON VERLAINE MADEMOISELLE GERNAY
--	--

HARBOUR WORKERS.

Miss ETHEL STAINER, Superintendent.

Miss MAUD COOP MRS. MACAULAY Miss DOROTHY MUMMERY	Miss ENID SPURGEON „ NORA SPURGEON „ WINNIE SPURGEON
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COMITE de PROTECTION des SOLDATS REFORMES. 32, GROSVENOR PLACE, LONDON.

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Miss L. ROTHSCHILD

**BRITISH CLUB FOR BELGIAN SOLDIERS,
12, CONNAUGHT PLACE, W. 2.**

Under the Patronage of His Excellency M. PAUL HYMAN, the Belgian Minister.

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MME. ED. CARTON DE WIART

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BRITISH CLUB FOR BELGIAN SOLDIERS.

12, CONNAUGHT PLACE, MARBLE ARCH, LONDON, W.

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Chairman Miss BIDWELL.

Hon. Treasurer ... H. CAMPBELL, Esq.
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Le "British Club for Belgian Soldiers" a été spécialement institué par le Comité à l'intention des Militaires Belges en congé en Angleterre.

Tous les Militaires Belges en uniforme, sont admis d'office et gratuitement, comme membres de Club, ils sont cordialement invités à fréquenter l'Etablissement le plus souvent possible.

Un cinéma, des salles de jeux avec billard, salles de lecture, salles de musique, salles de bains, etc., sont mises gracieusement à leur disposition.

Un buffet à prix très réduit est également installé.

Des excursions, avec guide, sont organisées, pour visiter la ville et les environs.

Des soirées musicales avec le concours d'artistes Anglais et Belges ont lieu au Club.

Des billets pour Théâtres, Opérettes, Cinémas, Jardin Zoologique sont offerts gratuitement.

De Engelse Club voor Belgische soldaten is uitsluitend gevestigd door het Comité, ten behoeve van Belgische Militairen met verlof in Engeland.

Alle Belgische Militairen in uniform, hebben gratis toegang als leden van den Club: sy worden hartelyk uitgenoodigd, de Inrichting zooveel mogelijk te bezoeken.

Een cinema Speelsalen met billiard, leesalen, musieksalen, badkamers enz. worden minzaamst ter hunner dispositie gesteld.

Eveneens, is er een buffet, tegen zeer matige pryzen geïnstalleerd.

Tochten, met geleiding, worden georganiseerd, om de stad en de omstreken te bezoeken.

Muzikale soirees, met medewerking van Engelse en Belgische Artisten vinden plaats in de Club.

Ingangkaarten voor Theaters, Opéretten, Cinemas, Dierentuin, worden kosteloos uit gegeven.

BRITISH CLUB *for* BELGIAN SOLDIERS

12 Connaught Place.

Marble Arch. W.

PARK LANE



Marble Arch

Hyde Park

OXFORD ST

BAYSWATER ROAD



NATIONAL FOOD FUND.

Under the patronage of H.R.H. PRINCESS CHRISTIAN;
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and His EXCELLENCY THE BELGIAN MINISTER.

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Hon. Auditors :

MESSRS. TANSLEY WITT & Co., Chartered Accountants, Chancery Lane, E.C.

Hon. Architect :

ARTHUR BLOMFIELD, Esq. (Sir Arthur Blomfield & Sons).

Secretary : MISS MURIEL DAVIS.

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Under the Patronage of S.A.R. MME. LA DUCHESSE DE VENDÔME, and the Presidency of:—

M. CH. DE BROQUEVILLE (Ministre de la Guerre).
M. PAUL HYMAN (Ministre Plenipotentiaire de Belgique à Londres).
M. EMILE VANDERVELDE (Ministre d'Etat).

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M. JULIEN WARNANT (Sénateur Suppléant).

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M. WASHINGTON SERRUYS.

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Working under the Presidency of M. EMILE VANDERVELDE (Belgian Minister of State).

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Auditors :

HAROLD EVERETT & Co., 3 to 7, Southampton Street, W.C. 2.

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A. W. COOKSEY (Architect).

T. H. CLEAR (Woollen Merchant).

GEO. LUFF (Merchant, Brit. Resident of Brussels).

Hon. Sec. : C. GRADDON (Engineer, Brit. Resident of Brussels).

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"CALIFORNIA HOUSE"

FOR DISABLED BELGIAN SOLDIERS.

82, LANCASTER GATE,

HYDE PARK, W.

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Commandant V.A.D. Red Cross: MISS HAMMOND.

Director Convalescent Home: MRS. FRANK MARBLE.

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Academy of Fine Arts, Maline.

KING ALBERT'S HOSPITALS ACCOMMODATION AND MILITARY MEDICAL STAFF.

Accommodation :

King Albert's Hospital, No. 1 (Staffordshire House)	Beds 270	
After two years was transferred to Gower Street	50	
King Albert's Hospital, No. 2 (Hanwell)	(now closed)	
" " " " 3 (Highgate)	Beds 275	
" " " " 4 (Folkestone)	40	
" " " " 5 (Tanner Street) used as a Receiving Depôt only	(now closed)	
2.—Number of soldiers treated in K.A.'s Hospitals, 1, 2, 3 and 4 for 1915, 1916 and 1917 ...		10,000

At King Albert's No. 5 (Tanner Street), 17,035 soldiers were registered, but as this establishment was a Receiving Station and Military Dépôt, and not a hospital, this number is not included in above.

MEDICAL MILITARY STAFF.

Médecin Principal de 2e Classe GODTS :—

Directeur du Service de Santé de l'Armée Belge dans le Royaume Uni. Directeur Medical du K.A.H. No. 1 et de l'Institut Ophtholmo-
logique de Londres.

Médecin de Regiment de 1e Classe LAMBRETTE :—

Directeur Medical du K.A.H. No. 3.

Médecin de Regiment de 1e Classe JACOBS :—

Chef du Service de grande chirurgie des K.A.H. de Londres.

Médecin de Regiment de 2e Classe JUSTICE :—

Directeur Medical du K.A.H. No. 4 à Folkestone.

Médecin de Bataillon de 2e Classe VERBRUGGE :—

Service d'Ote—Rhine—Laryngologie des K.A.H. de Londres.

Médecin-Adjoint SCHUERMANS :—

Service des maladies internes au K.A.H. No. 1.

Médecin-Adjoint HECKMANS :—

Service des maladies internes cutances et veneriennes au K.A.H. 3.

Médecin-Adjoint CROUSSE :

Attaché au Service du grande chirurgie des K.A.H. de Londres
et au Service de petite chirurgie au K.A.H. No. 3.

Médecin-Adjoint VANDERVOORT :—

Service de petite chirurgie au K.A.H. No. 3.

COMITÉ DES VISITES AUX BLESSÉS BELGES.

28, GROSVENOR GARDENS,

(VICTORIA STATION),

LONDON, S.W. 1.

SOUS LE HAUT PATRONAGE DE SON ALTESSE IMPÉRIALE
ET ROYALE MADAME LA PRINCESSE NAPOLEON.

Officially recognised by the Local Government Board and registered under the
War Charities Act, 1916.

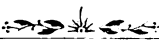
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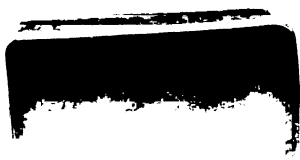
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